

# *The Mark of the Broad Arrow*



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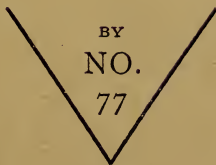
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# THE MARK OF THE BROAD ARROW

OR  
THE LIFE OF A CONVICT



*SECOND IMPRESSION*

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## PREFACE

IN an interesting work, published many years ago, appears the following sentence :—

“Has anyone, having actually been tried, convicted and sentenced to penal servitude, after working out the long years of slavery and obtaining his freedom, sat down to give the world an account of his experience in a plain unvarnished tale ?——I doubt it.”

When the author of that work penned those lines he, no doubt, thoroughly believed that he was stating the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. For on the face of it, few things are less likely than that any man, having the least respect for his family, or care for his own worldly prosperity, would voluntarily expose himself to the “flouts, jibes and jeers” which are, too frequently, heaped upon one

who, because he has been in a “ stable ’ — as many prisons are justly considered — is supposed, by many, to be a horse.

Then again the stigma which, rightly or wrongly, is attached to a criminal, and which ever afterwards handicaps him in the great life struggle, forbids him rushing into print.

So far from courting publicity, nine-tenths of those who have undergone a sentence of penal servitude are anxious above all things to conceal the fact, hence the widespread ignorance which hangs like a millstone around the neck of the body politic and retards its progress towards an enlightened penal philosophy.

But now and again some man comes along who, having undergone this trying ordeal, or (as is the case with the present writer) *because* he has undergone it—and that to an extent which few men could have borne and retained their faculties intact—is ready to fling personal considerations to the winds, and atone, by a public service in a line wherein the public needs such

a service—for his previous offences against society. Such a man am I.

One does not pretend to be actuated by an unmixed purity of motive. Very few, indeed, can honestly say that they are wholly disinterested actors on the stage of life ; but it is well if, in the pursuit of an honest livelihood, one can, at the same time, confer a public benefit. This is all I claim. The very circumstance which disqualifies me for almost every other calling best qualifies me for this ; and in the work which I now commence I shall endeavour to instruct as well as entertain. So much by way of preamble.

THE AUTHOR.





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# THE MARK OF THE BROAD ARROW.

## CHAPTER I

My acquaintance with prison life extends over a period of some fifteen years, and embraces the most important "convict" and local prisons in the country.

Beginning with Pentonville—where I first came under the "broad arrow"—I shall endeavour to describe as I go along the persons, places, and things most worthy of notice in my long penal "progress," and shall commence my narrative with some account of one of its most remarkable Governors.

This gentleman was a person who

did not look upon the drawing of his salary—£800 a year—as the sole object of his life, or the only privilege attached to his office.

He had served most of his time in the Indian army, where he had earned the unenviable reputation of being a “martinet.”

Transferred from the army to the Civil Service, he appears to have imported into the latter those qualities which, however suitable to the natives of India, are quite at variance with western notions of civilisation. He, after a brief stay at one or two minor establishments, was appointed to the Governorship of “No. 1, Public Works” Convict Prison, at Chatham.

It was once said of a certain Roman Governor that “he found a city and left it a desert.” The Governor of Pentonville found a “public works” station and left it a “slaughter-house.” Such, at least, was the description generally given at Chatham prison, under the administration of this Anglo-Indian despot.

Our prison system is supposed to be governed by two very different principles : the penal and the reformatory. And those who have but small practical knowledge of the subject tell us that the former is but the handmaid of the latter, and that the object constantly kept in view by all prison officials is to turn the wicked man from his wickedness and induce him to do the thing that is lawful and right.

Taking a charitable view of established facts, one may hope that such is the case with a large number of prison officials, but it certainly was not the case with the Governor, who had a simple mode of treating every prisoner alike—what was good for the goose was equally good for the gander.

The Governor's philosophy amounted to this :—" The soul that sinneth must die. I am not the doctor or the chaplain. I am the executioner. If the ' wicked man ' offends against the rules and regulations, it is my special function to punish him, and having

done that, I have discharged my duty."

Nothing in the world could be simpler or more to the point than this ; and to do the Governor justice he stuck to his philosophy through thick and thin. Unfortunately, the temperament of the offender was not taken into account in that stolid man's "system," and the consequence was that Chatham prison—long since shut up—was known to all convicts as "the slaughter-house."

But, honour to whom honour is due. If the Governor was hard upon the transgressor it mattered not to him whether the sinner was clad in the drab suit of the felon or in the blue serge of the official.

Indeed, if he, at any time, made a distinction between cattle and cattle, the official came in for the lion's share of his wrath. In a word, this "oriental despot," as the Governor was called by a certain German, of whom more anon, was quite as terrible a bogie man to his own officers as to the convicts, and



if he indulged in severities and applied the lash vigorously to any prisoner, he never allowed his subordinate officers to treat those under them with cruelty.

I had a taste of the Governor's methods before I had been two months under him, and the result of our first meeting was not such as would encourage anyone to invite a repetition of it. It happened in this way :

I was only a raw recruit at the time, and had not acquired the knack of marching in the military style which is insisted upon at all convict prisons.

My "party" consisted of some seventeen or eighteen prisoners, every one of whom had been in the prison for some time before my arrival, and, as I was "tramping" behind a man in the close compact order, observed only in convict prisons, I accidentally scraped his heel with my boot.

The fellow turned upon me in a very savage way and deliberately kicked me on the shin. Foolishly enough, I struck out at him, and, of course, a tussle ensued which threw the whole

party into a state of confusion and disorder.

On reaching the prison we were both reported for "fighting in the ranks," and next morning I found myself standing within the little railed bar which was called the "dock," in the Governor's office.

It was the first time that I had been reported for any breach of the rules ; and the Governor asked me what I had to say to the charge. I explained matters as well as I could, and reminded him that it was purely accidentally that I had grazed the man's heel, as I had never been in the army, and had not quite got into the military style of marching.

"Very good," replied the Governor, "I will teach you to get into it presently. Two days bread and water, and sixty-four marks—next man."

The two days "bread and water"—sixteen ounces of bread each day only—was hard enough to bear ; but the loss of sixty-four marks meant a week's additional imprisonment, and

I naturally thought that the punishment was out of all proportion to the offence. But that was the usual way in which the Governor dealt with the delinquent, so I had to go through it.

As a set off to this harshness, I shall refer to another interview which I had with that gentleman some eight months later.

One of the warders on my landing, a great bully, would report a prisoner for the most trivial offence. He gave me a severe drubbing one day because my tin utensils—water-jug, basin, etc.—were not polished up to the shining point, and he wound up his harangue by threatening to report me to the Governor.

Knowing that to be “reported” meant certain punishment, I asked to see the chief warder, and explained to him that the tin was so worn off my vessels that it was impossible to make them shine, which was really the case.

The chief, however, would not do anything in the matter, but he sent in

my name to the office, and next day I again found myself before the Governor, to whom I related the whole story. Addressing me in his usual rapid and practical way, that gentleman said—

“ You are not under report ; I shall see the tins myself—next man.”

He *did* see the tins himself—going to my cell for that purpose—and when I returned from labour that evening I found a complete set of new tin utensils in my cell. He had ordered the old tins to be removed.

I thought the incident would have closed at that point. But here again the Governor's method of settling matters came in, and I learned next morning that the “ bully ” had to face the music in the dreaded office, and was put upon extra duty as a punishment.

Before relating further incidents, it may be interesting if I here give a brief account of the internal arrangements of a convict prison ; but it should always be borne in mind that things have altered in certain minor par-

ticulars since the day when I first entered Pentonville under a sentence of seven years' penal servitude.

At that time the cellular accommodation at all "public works" prisons was of the most primitive kind. Dark, cold and ill-ventilated, life in such a prison as Portland, for instance, was a misery from which scores have—to my knowledge—delivered themselves by suicide. Lately, however, things are rapidly improving, not only in the external construction of our convict prisons, but in their internal economy.

It is now the rule that a cell shall not be used for the separate confinement of a prisoner unless it is certified by a director or one of H.M. Inspectors of Prisons to be of such a size, and to be lighted, warmed, ventilated and fitted up in such a manner as may be requisite for health, and furnished with the means of enabling a prisoner to communicate at any time with an officer of the prison.

When I first went to Portland prison I was put into a cell smaller than

the third class compartment of a railway carriage. A cell into which God's daylight never entered, except through an aperture under the door, and so badly ventilated that, when the weather was bad and we had to be sent in from the works to our cells, I have often become quite sick.

To read, I had, in the day time, to lie full length upon the floor and thrust my book half-way under the door, in order to obtain sufficient light to trace the printed characters. And, even when winter came and the gas had to be lighted, the little flicker allowed from the "regulation" burner was scarcely strong enough to force its way through the tiny thick-ribbed glass window, inserted in the wall outside. Thus it came about that, deprived of light during the day, and with an insufficient quantity during the winter nights, my sight became impaired, and I had first to take to glasses and then to give up reading altogether, until I was removed to another ward of the prison.

Rising at 5.20 a.m. in summer, and 5.40 in winter, the whole of Saturday afternoon and Sunday was spent in that kind of cell, the only relief being the hour allowed for exercise in the yard and the time spent in the chapel at Divine service.

For some years prisoners were allowed to take their exercise in association; that is, if they were "class" men they could walk two abreast around the ring and talk as freely as if they were outside the prison gates.

But difficulties arose—chiefly caused by prisoners themselves—and this privilege was taken away. Now, however, it has been restored, and under the last Prison Act men may now again converse at exercise.

At all convict stations, men's work ceased at 5.20 p.m. in summer, and nearly an hour earlier in winter. They could then spend the interval as they pleased in their cells between those hours and 7.45 p.m.—when the bed bell rang.



The form of bed used was the hammock, and this had to be neatly folded up each day and placed upon a tiny shelf in an angle of the cells.

Except when any startling incident, such as an escape, a murder, a suicide, or a brawl occurred—and I shall have to narrate many such stirring events in the course of this work—there was little or nothing to break the dreadful monotony of prison life at Pentonville and Portland in my time. I shall, therefore, close this introductory chapter by referring to an arrangement in connection with the locks on all the doors in such prisons as Millbank, Holloway, and others in which female prisoners are confined.

“ Rule 3 ” enacts that “ the wards, cells, and yards where females are confined shall be secured by locks different from those securing the wards, cells, and yards allotted to male prisoners.”

At first sight this regulation may strike one as being a little superfluous—considering the character of the

institution to which it applies. But I shall relate some facts presently which show that, strange as it may appear to some, it has become a necessary arrangement.

## CHAPTER II

To have had a practical personal acquaintance with the interior of convict and local prisons for some fifteen years ; to have endured the tortures of the most trying penal regimen in the world, and all the miseries of enforced association with the vilest of the vile for a large part of one's whole life are circumstances upon which no man can offer or receive congratulations.

But if the facilities which such experiences afford for studying human character in all its variety be utilised, the circumstance in itself cannot be looked upon as an unmixed or un-

mitigated evil, since the man who has served such a long apprenticeship must—unless he is a fool—have acquired an intimate knowledge of his subject.

This, I think, is as much as I can say in connection with my prison experiences and observations. My imprisonment has disqualified me for any other occupation ; but it has, by supplying material not otherwise obtainable, best fitted me for the one now in hand.

Wherefore let me return to my subject. The criminal populations of the “ Model Prison ”—as Pentonville, for some occult reason, was called—was of the most varied description in the days of the early seventies.

In his evidence before a Committee of “ the House,” the then Governor, Captain Lewes, declared that “ almost every social rank was represented in the congregation which assembled daily in the prison chapel.”

It was not merely that the establishment was overcrowded at that time—

it is one of the characteristics of "the Ville" to *be* overcrowded. It was the quality rather than the quantity of its inmates that struck me as being the distinctive mark and peculiarity of that prison when I first entered it.

The great central depot of our convict settlements, criminals from all parts of the country were poured into it ; as all male prisoners under sentence of penal servitude were then sent up to Pentonville to go through the first stage of their punishment—nine calendar months—in "strict solitary confinement."

I have seen members of every profession, including legislators, doctors, journalists, bankers, military and naval officers, lawyers, college dons, and even high government officials, hobnobbing with burglars, swindlers, forgers, and footpads, within the gloomy precincts of the old prison in the Caledonian Road.

A bare enumeration of all the distinguished guests of Her late Majesty with whom I have, from time to time,

been brought into contact during my sojourn in durance vile, would fill a volume. Their name is legion.

Selecting only those of world-wide notoriety, the first in order of time—as well as in order of importance whom I there met—was one whom many will recognise under his mock title of “Sir Roger,” and who was then known to all as “The Claimant.”

Undergoing fourteen years’ penal servitude on two charges (fraud and perjury), this great mass of flesh and bone made his *debut* on the boards of Pentonville in ’74; and I saw him within a few hours of his arrival.

With downcast eyes and heavy tread, he entered “C” division of the prison by the door leading to the infirmary, where he had just been examined by the medical officer.

For a moment he stood stock still, gazing intently at a little stool which was placed in the centre of the ward, and upon which he was invited, by the officer in charge, to be seated.

On one side of the stool stood a

fellow convict with shirt sleeves tucked up, brandishing a comb in one hand and a pair of scissors in the other. This was the barber of the establishment, and he had, before the giant appeared upon the scene, received instructions to be "very careful" as to how he should clip the next prisoner's hair.

The "next prisoner" turned out to be "Sir Roger." But "Sir Roger" did not relish the idea of having his locks shorn, and he looked askance, first at the stool, then at the barber, and finally at the warder.

The latter, however, was in no mood for trifling, and since "Sir Roger" did not take kindly to the shearing process, he took hold of the claimant's arm, pointed to the stool, and exclaimed—

"It is an order of the Home Office that all prisoners shall have their hair cut on arriving at the prison. Don't waste time."

"The Claimant" may have thought that, as he had plenty of time on his hands, he might as well use it that way



as any other ; anyhow, he still fought shy of the stool, and it was not until the chief warder was called and a little physical force employed that “ Sir Roger ” submitted to the inevitable and allowed his hirsute adornments to go the way of all hair in H.M. convict prisons.

But the troubles of the barber in dealing with “ Sir Roger ” were as nothing compared with those of the tailor when that functionary was called upon to cover this elephantine figure.

The wardrobe at Pentonville was a very extensive one ; but, large as it was, it contained not a single article which would come within measurable distance of his ponderous proportions.

I heard a ludicrously funny story in connection with the attempt to clothe The Claimant in convict garb, which went the round of the prison at the time ; and, although it has been told more than once, it is not yet gray, and will stand repeating here.

When “ Sir Roger ” was first brought to the prison he was at once taken to

the store-room to be fitted out. One after another the suits were taken from the racks, only to be thrown aside as inadequate. The poor store-keeper was at his wit's end. Nothing which he could command would fit The Claimant, whose gigantic limbs refused to be enveloped in anything that the prison wardrobe could supply. For some time the prisoner stood there half naked ; but, after two hours and a half of this kind of thing, he put his back up and insisted upon resuming his own ample garments, which demand, of course, could not under the circumstances be denied him.

Thus the man who had puzzled judges, juries, barristers, and herald officers to find him a name finished by puzzling the authorities at the model prison to find him a pair of breeches.

Fortunately, however—so the story goes—there was just then a kind of sartorial genius working out a sentence of penal servitude in the tailoring department of the prison. This man,

genius like, discarding all known laws of measurement, and snapping his fingers at the question of latitude and longitude, improvised a suit of unheard-of dimensions, into which "Sir Roger" was hastily thrust.

Thus rigged out, The Claimant—being a Roman Catholic—was, to the great joy of all officials at "The Ville," immediately removed to Old Millbank prison, congratulating himself, not, perhaps, that his identity had been established, but that something had at last been found to cover his nakedness.

This son of Anak—and of the Wapping butcher—was not detained at Pentonville long enough to allow extensive observations to be made of his peculiarities; but even during his short stay there he was the observed of all observers, and I know, as a matter of fact, that, notwithstanding Lord Chief Justice Cockburn's lengthy and complete exposure of the man's character, many of the officials still believed that he was the Real Simon Pure—some, indeed, laid odds on the

validity of his claim to the Tichborne estates.

Nay, more, there was, until quite recently, an old warder connected with Pentonville who was proof against all argument, and far into the nineties this penal patriarch clung to his original faith in The Claimant—and that, too, long after this colossal and “monumental liar” had told us who he was.

Passing over Col. Hargraves and a small knot of aristocratic sinners who passed through Pentonville in the seventies, I come to a triumvirate of notorious criminals, than whom none caused greater dismay among bankers during the later part of the last century—I allude to the American forgers McDonald, and the two brothers, W. and Austin Bidwell.

In these memoirs of famous criminals I propose to deal only with their prison histories, so far as I know them. The performances which resulted in their imprisonment are already matters of public knowledge.

Sentenced to penal servitude for life, on a series of charges of extensive forgeries involving serious loss to our own Bank of England amongst others, the three men were removed from Newgate to Pentonville as speedily as possible. But it was not then generally known how very nearly they had succeeded in defeating justice by an organised attempt to escape from the city prison, to which a prison official was a party.

In consequence of this abortive effort to "break prison," the reins of discipline were tightened—so far as they were concerned—on their arrival at Pentonville. It was no uncommon custom to place men who had been sentenced together for the same offence in adjacent cells, and thus inter-communication amongst old chums was possible.

But before the notorious bank forgers had been in "The Ville" a single hour they were located in different wings of the prison, thus rendering personal contact with each other impossible.

For a time they bowed to the stern law of necessity. But as one of the trio afterwards told me at Chatham prison, this apparent acquiescence in their fate was only a blind, employed for the purpose of covering their secret design to buy their way—if they failed by other means—out of the house of bondage.

Impecunious prison warders are as open to the golden bait in these days as in those ; but they were more so then than they are at present.

Negotiations were opened—through intermediaries whom it is not necessary to name—with certain officers. But probably, in view of the then recent *fiasco* at Newgate, or, more likely, in view of the very close watch and ward which was kept over those particular prisoners and their warders by the higher officials, no opportunity presented itself, and although a large sum was offered—and spent—in bribing “likely” accomplices, by some American friends of the prisoners, who took up their abode in London for the



purpose of "greasing" the convicts' way out of Pentonville, nothing beyond an occasional feast in their cells ever came of it.

As illustrating the tightness of the grip which the authorities at Pentonville maintained to the last over McDonald and his companions in crime and punishment, I may mention the fact that a prisoner, located within a few cells of McDonald, and who had neither friends or money to assist him in his flight, succeeded in breaking through the ventilator of his cell one night, and letting himself down by his bed-clothing — which he made ropes of—broke, first into an out-house, then into the lodge, where he secured some clothing, and finally through an iron-barred window, and got clear away.

Of three bank forgers, one only—Austin Bidwell—survived the severities of the dreadful life sentence ; and even he did not complete the full twenty years which all such prisoners must serve before they can be released, but



was discharged by a "special order" of the Home Secretary when he had completed but nineteen years of his sentence. The circumstances which evoked this special order was one very creditable to a man who had known the horrors of such a penal establishment as Chatham.

He was returning with his gang from labour one evening, when a fellow prisoner was seen to fling himself into one of the Admiralty basins. The whole party stood looking on, but not one tendered the least help. It was an exciting scene. There was the man struggling in the water, which must at length overcome him, while above were a number of fellow men watching the drowning convict's struggles.

Suddenly a tall, slim, middle-aged prisoner was seen to plunge into the basin, and, at the risk of his own life, Austin Bidwell—for it was he—brought the would-be suicide to land.

I have known many similar acts of bravery to have been done in convict prisons ; but that "conspiracy of

silence," which shuts out from the public ken so much of the inner life of our penal establishments, prevents publicity being given to them.

By some means unknown to me this little incident got wind, and the Press took the matter up, with the result we have seen.

Austin Bidwell, with his cropped head, and doubtless also with the iron in his soul, was suddenly restored to freedom—and to love. When the cable-gram announcing his speedy release reached America, the lady to whom he had been married, twenty years before, at the English Embassy in Paris, and from whom he was torn when a special extradition treaty was hastily enacted to secure his arrest in Cuba, whither he had fled, at once set out to meet the man for whose sake she had lived a life of celibacy and devotion, and who was thus unexpectedly restored to her.

The meeting was an impressive one ; and I have reason to believe that even whilst I am writing these lines the only surviving member of the great bank

forging fraternity is enjoying health and prosperity in the States.

I knew Bidwell personally. For years we worked together in the "Slaughter-house" ; and I can say that of the many thousand convicts with whom I have rubbed shoulders, I cannot recall one who bore his punishment in a more manly spirit than the junior member of the "McDonald Gang."

## CHAPTER III

ANOTHER gang, of no single member of which can I say anything favourable, was in Pentonville in my time. I refer to three scoundrels, two of them brothers—another such trinity as the “Bank Forgers”—who were undergoing long terms of penal servitude for one of the most sensational frauds in connection with the turf known in criminal history.

I had never heard of the doings of the trio until one fine morning when, sitting in chapel and—I hope—listening devoutly to all that our venerable chaplain had to say, I received a gentle dig in the ribs from someone immediately behind me.

To turn one's head is a high crime and misdemeanour in an institution where one of the fundamental laws is that you should ever look straight in front of you.

But if I could not see the speaker I could hear him, and this is what I heard on that particular morning :—

“ I say, old man, let me have some soap, salt, and cleaning rags when we get back to the cells, won't you ? ”

I happened to be a “ cleaner ” on the same landing as the speaker, and of course I nodded assent. Thinking that he had delivered himself of all he had to say, I turned my attention from him to the pulpit. But it soon became clear that the fellow behind me had another important communication to make, as my ribs were again punched.

By this time I had established his identity, and knew him to be the elder of the criminal brothers. Being always anxious to hear what any prisoner had to say, I leant back a little on my seat to catch his words.

“ I want to get next to you to-

morrow morning when we are coming here, so hang back a bit in your cell till I get up to you."

Another assenting nod and I once more turned my attentions to the pulpit, notwithstanding that another loquacious gentleman situated on my left solicited my opinions, first about the weather, then about the soup we were to have for dinner on that day ; he was about to start on some other subject when he was detected by an officer, called from his seat, and sent back to his cell under " report " for " talking in chapel."

Whatever his opinions about the weather, I am sure he changed those about the soup that day, since he was mulcted in his dinners for the two days following.

Next morning when the cell doors were unlocked for the thirty minutes' service in the fine old chapel of Pentonville, I hung back, as requested, until I saw my new " friend " pass my cell, when I at once stepped forth and followed.

I had no idea whatever as to why he wished to get next to me ; but we had not been in the chapel many minutes when, in that undertone acquired by practice, and which enables one to converse freely without risk in all prisons, my neighbour began—

“ Do you know anything of the —— frauds ? ”

“ No.”

“ That’s what I’m here for.”

“ Oh ! What sort of a thing was it ? ”

“ Only squeezing an old geeser out of a little bit of oof.”

“ How did you manage it ? ”

“ Oh, she was hot on horses, and wanted to carry off all before her.”

“ How much did you rob the woman of ? ”

“ We didn’t rob her. We only played into her hands. She wanted to make oof, so we put her on the gee-gees.”

“ Well, that sounds all right. How much did you make out of the affair ? ”



“ Only a few thousand ; though they said it was much more. But ——— done the best part of it. I was only put on as a dummy. The old hen fell in love with me, and of course I played her up.”

“ What did the other one (his brother) do ? ”

“ Done nothing, but pretended to do a lot. He was the clerk—you know.”

I did not know, but, like his brother, I pretended to know, and so, for another fifteen minutes, I had to sit there, listening to the exploits of as unscrupulous a gang of scoundrels as I have ever tumbled across.

The most remarkable thing about the chief actor in these frauds is that he was a most highly educated man, proficient in most European languages. The chaplain of Pentonville assured me that he was also the best Hebrew scholar he had ever met.

The old warder in charge of our landing cried out to me one Saturday afternoon, when he was very busy :—

“ I say, No. 14, go down to 31 cell —(the “ scholar’s ”)—and see what that d—— Jew is about. I’m sure he’s up to something to-day, from what I saw in their confounded synagogue. I’d make the beggar work on Saturday, the same as you have to do. But go on. See what he’s up to.”

Off I went to 31 cell, and sure enough the “ beggar ” *was* “ up to something,” not sanctioned by the powers that be at Whitehall.

Seated in front of his cell table—which was quite invisible when looking through the “ inspection hole,” cut into all prison doors—he was ravenously devouring lumps of solid meat !

What sort of meat it was, or where it came from, are questions which I should not like to answer.

Anyhow, there he was, to all outward appearance, making a glutton of himself. But knowing what marvellous gastronomic feats some German Jews can perform, and knowing moreover that few opportunities for such performances are given to English

convicts—Jews or Gentiles—I contented myself with giving a vigorous kick at the door, and hastened back to inform the warder that “No. 31” was deeply immersed in study, and just then as harmless as a sucking-dove.

Alack, alack ! Within twenty minutes of my favourable report, the principal warder, whose suspicions of “No. 31” were also directed to the “d——d Jews” generally—came along the landing on tiptoe, and suddenly opening the cell door, found him still in the act of gorging.

Seizing the remnants of the feast—a lump of boiled beef, some carrots, and other adjuncts—he questioned the Hebrew as to whence such unprison-like luxuries came ; and not getting a satisfactory explanation—a thing utterly impossible under the circumstances—he closed the cell door, took out the man’s card from the plate—affixed to each prisoner’s door—and, coming on to the store cell, informed the old warder that he was to “report”

“ No. 31 ” for having contraband articles in his possession.

The following morning the man was brought before the Governor, who, taking a serious view of the matter, remitted the case for adjudication by the Director.

It was not the first time that “ No. 31 ” had violated the regulations in this way ; and as he could not get the kind of materials found in his cell except from the outside he was “ pump’d ” by several officials with the view of getting at the source of the supply.

They might as well have pump’d the wall. Not all the king’s horses nor all the king’s men could elicit aught from the scholarly delinquent ; and so they had to fall back upon the old method of punishing an offence which they were, and still are, wholly unable to prevent.

As far as the man’s confederates were concerned, things went on as usual. They could get whatever they took a fancy to. Nay, more, when

the other suffered the punishment—fourteen days' bread and water—imposed by the Director, he was immediately supplied with a fresh stock of provisions, and thereafter, as far as I know, lived in clover, until he was removed to the "public works" prison, when, of course, I lost sight of him.

Some sixteen years later I went on a trip to Paris ; and, alighting at the "Gare du Nord," I met two men, whom I at once recognised as the two brothers whom I have spoken of.

They did not recognise me. But, being curious as to their mode of life in the "Gay City," I followed them to a *café* in the Rue Rivoli, where some friends were evidently awaiting their arrival.

After a brief consultation over that filthy decoction—absinthe, the company broke up, and each went forth into the dark night—alone.

Whether or not they had gone back to their old tricks and dupes I know not ; but one capable of reading

between the lines could readily perceive that *some* mysterious business was in hand, and that the brothers were up to the hilt in "affairs."

But to return to Pentonville Prison. I think it was about the fag-end of December, '78, or early in January, '79, that I was brought into contact with the most notorious burglar of the last century—a man whose name will go down to posterity as one who equalled Jack Shepherd, Dick Turpin, and all the other monsters of crime, real and fictitious, whom noxious literature has pitch-forked into the ranks of heroes and demi-gods.

Charles Peace, or—to use his *alias*—John Ward, was under a sentence of penal servitude for life when I first tumbled across him ; and my "introduction" to him, or, to be accurate, his introduction to me, was of a very informal character, and happened in this wise :—

I was one day unexpectedly summoned to appear before the Governor. It turned out that this hasty summons



was the prelude to my immediate release—ordered by the Home Secretary in consequence of disclosures made by another person, and which proved my innocence of the crime—for my supposed implication in which I had then already suffered five years' imprisonment.

There were fourteen other prisoners, filed up in single rank, outside the Governor's office, each awaiting his turn to enter that gentleman's sanctum.

I was the last but one of the group, the end one being a little wizened-faced man, wearing spectacles, whom I had never seen before.

Whilst these in the front were, one by one, going into the Governor's office, the man behind me whispered the following extraordinary sentence in my ear—

“I am going to be topped.”

Not then understanding what he meant by the word “topped,” I turned round, and saw the little wizened-faced man in spectacles glaring at me somewhat furiously.



“ Going to be what ? ” I queried.

“ Going to be hung, you b—— fool.”

Again I looked round, and saw a diabolical grin on the hard features of the little man in spectacles.

It came to my turn to see the Governor before I could ask the little man any further questions, and in the excitement caused by the Governor's announcement that I was “ to be discharged at once ” I quite forgot all about my recent acquaintance who was “ going to be topped.”

Later on that day a warder, who had seen us talking outside the office, asked me if I knew the man. Of course I had to confess my ignorance, and then, for the first time, I learned the history of “ Charley ”—murderer and king of burglars.

Before my release that day I was again taken to the office, and in passing “ Charley's ” cell—situated on the first landing of “ A ” hall—I saw the little man busily engaged in writing what looked to me like a “ petition,”

but what I soon heard was that very confession of murder which liberated young William Habron—who had been sentenced to death for the crime—and led to that famous journey to Leeds, where, after a daring dash for freedom from the window of a railway carriage, the redoubtable “king of burglars” was hung by the neck until he was dead.

Dangerous as Charles Peace was when free, he was a model of propriety when under lock and key at Pentonville. But whether it was his dreadful reputation, or his repellant expression that operated against him, I cannot say. He was, however, a most unpopular prisoner.

Here is a note, made shortly after my memorable interview with the little man at Pentonville:—

“I never heard one good word spoken of Charles Peace; but I *have* heard many hard words applied to him.”

One critical quidnunc, assuming the airs of the bench, delivered himself

of the following *ipse dixit* :—" The man must be fundamentally villainous, as he was never known to smile."

If it is true that one can

" Smile and smile and be a villain,"

the bottom is knocked out of this argument. But, as a matter of fact, the imputation against our " king of burglars " is quite erroneous. " His majesty " has been known to smile, and indeed there was a very broad grin upon his " dial " when I saw him writing that famous confession in his cell at Pentonville. More than that, I have it on good authority that this reputed non-smiler, when under the very shadow of " the beam " in Leeds gaol, indulged in a downright hearty laugh.

## CHAPTER IV

THE DAILY LIFE AND ROUTINE OF A  
PRISONER—THE HOSPITAL—ETC.

ALTHOUGH every county—and almost every town in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, possesses either a “convict” or a “local” prison, it is a well known fact that not one in every thousand who contribute annually a large sum for the maintenance of our penal establishments really understand the “nature, character, and substance” of the institution they support.

Talking with the editor of a leading London weekly some time ago about a certain noble lord who had just then

completed a sentence of penal servitude at Parkhurst prison, the editor exclaimed—

“What the public most desires to know is : When does my lord get up ? What does he do when he is up ? What do they give him to eat ? How does he get along under the prison regimen ? When does he go to bed ? etc., etc., etc.”

Such questions as these appear to me who have spent the best part of my life in prison to be wholly superfluous and void of interest. Familiar with the details of prison life himself, an ex-prisoner is apt to suppose that everyone else is equally conversant with the subject, and therefore that such details are “stale, flat, and unprofitable.”

Such, until quite recently, was my own view. But the publisher of this work—a man whose fingers are ever on the public pulse, and who knows exactly what the public requires—has made it clear to me that the common, everyday experiences of prisoners under sentence have at least

as much attraction for the general reader as a critical analysis of our prison system, or a record of occasional and sensational incidents.

This being so, I will now proceed to give a detailed account of a single day's experience in H.M. prison, Pentonville, under the old regime, reserving for a future chapter an account of prison life in these latter days.

The convict's daily routine consisted then, as now, of twelve working hours, inclusive of the time allowed for meals, and each day was a copy of that which preceded and succeeded it. Like the laws of the Medes and Persians, prison rules "altereth not"—they are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

Taking things in chronological order, the day was worked out as follows—

6 a.m. All prisoners rise to the sound of the bell at the front gate, and proceed to dress, wash, make up their bed, sweep up their cell, be in readiness to empty slops and show their sheets—hold both sheets up in view of the warder who first unlocks each

cell door—and should they desire to see the doctor, governor, chaplain, or chief warder, to give their name and “register number” (for all prisoners are designated by the number given them on entering the prison, by which alone they are officially known), to the warder as he passes each cell.

A water jug is then placed outside the cell—one gallon of water is allowed daily to every prisoner for sanitary purposes, whilst for drinking he may have two or three extra pints daily, should he require it—the door is then closed, and the convict sets about cleaning up his “tin ware,” viz., his household utensils.

7.30. A funny clinking sound—as of a “spinning-wheel”—strikes the ear of the prisoner in his cell. Long acquaintance with this peculiar sound has taught him that it comes from the “lift,” by means of which prisoners’ rations are sent up from the kitchen to the various wards of the prison.

Beginning at say No. 1 cell, the attendants on each ward set out to



distribute the morning meal. Each cell door is unlocked in rotation, and the prisoner receives eight ounces of good white bread and three-quarters of a pint of cocoa. I am here describing the old rations, not those now served.

In order to make matters clear, and avoid unnecessary repetition, I give here a diagram of the "dietary scale," a copy of which was hung up in every cell of the prison.

DAYS.	BREAKFAST.	DINNER.	SUPPER.
Sunday.	$\frac{3}{4}$ pint cocoa. 8 ozs. bread,	4 ozs. of cheese and 12 ozs. of bread.	1 pint gruel, 8 ozs. bread.
Monday.	Ditto.	4 ozs. boiled beef, with its own liquor, 12 ozs. potatoes.	Ditto.
Tuesday.	Ditto.	$\frac{3}{4}$ pint of shin of beef soup and potatoes as before.	Ditto.
Wednes- day.	Ditto.	12 ozs. of suet pudding and potatoes as before.	Ditto.
Thursday.	Ditto.	Same as on Tuesday.	Ditto.
Friday.	Ditto.	4 ozs. "tinned" meat and potatoes as before.	Ditto.
Saturday.	Ditto.	Same as on Tuesday and Thursday.	Ditto.

The foregoing " table " represents the ordinary rations served out daily to convicts undergoing the first nine months of their sentences. Should a prisoner be in the hospital, or under punishment for any prison offence, the ordinary scale was done away with and quite a different one substituted, as at present.

Convicts in hospital were not considered to be under the prison diet at all ; and the " medical officer " had the power of ordering whatever he thought suitable in each particular case.

I have known men who fared as well in the infirmary at Pentonville prison as they might have done in any third rate hotel in London. Flesh, fish and fowl, port wine, brandy, stout, and bottled ales, custards, puddings, and other un-prison-like luxuries, are all at the disposal of the medical staff.

In this connection I may here relate an incident which occurred in Chatham prison when I myself was the *bénéficiaire*.

I happened to have been in the infirmary for some three weeks, from the result of an accident which affected the big toe of my right foot, but which otherwise did not injure me. My general health was good—in fact, I longed to get away from the hospital and be at work again.

One morning, however, the medical officer came round the infirmary cells as usual to see his patients. On ordinary occasions he was always attended by a warder, but on this particular morning he came round by himself, unlocking each cell and examining each patient.

On entering mine he looked at me attentively for a few moments, and said :—

“ Well, how are you this morning ? ”

“ I feel a lot better, doctor, thank you,” I replied.

“ Oh, but you are not better ! You must go to bed at once——” I was then walking about my cell, chattering to myself, as was my wont.

“ But, doctor, I don’t feel that I

want to go to bed. I am much better, and would like to go to work again."

"Nonsense. You are not able to go to work. Go to bed, I tell you. I'll send you up something which will put you all right. Now get in between the sheets at once."

In less than ten minutes an orderly officer rushed up to my cell, handing me a large measure, telling me that I was to drink the contents at intervals of half-an-hour. There were four divisions in the measure.

Looking at it, I could not tell what the prescription was, but on tasting it I at once recognised that it was port wine.

For nearly a fortnight I was supplied with a measure of this delicious liquid daily, until at last, sickening of it, I told the doctor that he was making me a wine-bibber and that I wished he would allow me bottled stout instead.

"All right," said the good old doctor. "You shall have stout or anything else you may fancy," and accordingly I was given a bottle of

Guinness's XX stout for the remainder of my time.

But this is only "by the way," and I will now return to the daily routine.

8.45 a.m. The cells were once more unlocked, and each prisoner (except those under punishment) had to attend morning service in the chapel.

This function over, all returned to and were locked up in their respective cells to await the next order of the day — the hour's exercise in the grounds.

The manner of "taking the air" then was precisely similar to that which obtains now, and consisted in walking round an asphalt ring for an hour, in single file, or, like "Brown's cows," one after the other, each prisoner being supposed to keep three paces from the one immediately preceding him.

10.30 a.m. On returning from "exercise," the labour, which was of a very miscellaneous character, including weaving, tailoring, shoe-making, mat-making and picking oakum, commenced.

With the exception of carpenters, builders, gasfitters, and other occupations necessitating association, all work was done in the cells, each man being thus employed for from six to eight hours daily.

11.45 a.m. The "clicking" sound before mentioned was again heard, and we all knew that our dinners—the only substantial meal of the day—was under weigh.

By noon every prisoner had received his ration, which he was allowed nearly an hour and a half to discuss.

1.30 p.m. Labour recommenced, and providing that he kept himself clear of "reports" a prisoner might, by the time (5.30) work for the day was suspended, earn eight marks—the maximum number. Six was the minimum.

The odd things about those marks was that, although great stress was laid upon the necessity of "earning" them, no prisoner was a whit the better off for having earned them, as at that time no remission of sentence was



allowed or could be earned by any convict until he had completed the first nine months of his sentence ; in other words, until he had left Pentonville prison and had arrived at a " public works " station.

A recent Act of Parliament has altered all that, and now a prisoner may begin to earn a remission of his sentence from the very day that sentence is passed.

5.30 p.m. Labour, except in some cases, ceased ; tools were collected, and a close inspection made of each cell by the warder in charge, to see that all was right before supper was served and the day staff went off duty.

5.45 p.m. Supper (see scale) delivered to each man, and cells then locked up for the day.

7.45 p.m. The bed bell rang ; another hasty visit was paid to the cells by the " patrols "—two in number—and each man then made down his plank bed and tumbled in for the night.

8 p.m. Lights all turned out, and



the night watchmen took over the charge of the prison. The convict's day was over.

One of the most disagreeable reminiscences of those days — or rather nights—was the hourly howl of the officers on duty in the various yards surrounding the old prison.

The custom then was, when the hour struck, for a watchman, armed with a gun and a lantern, to “beat the bounds” of his own yards and to cry out, as loud as he could—

“Twelve o'clock. All's well!”

This midnight yell, which, by the way, often frightened me at first, as it was dragged out in a most unearthly fashion, was taken up by the watchmen in the adjacent yards, and in this manner went the round of the prison precincts, so that the higher officials, whose homes were situated within those precincts, knew, from hour to hour, whether things were in a satisfactory state or otherwise.

In cases of fire, escapes, or other disturbing incidents, this nocturnal

yelling was suspended for the time, so that one could on such occasions tell whenever things went awry.

To complete the survey of the official day, I may say that the "great events" in a prisoner's authorised experiences were (1) the writing of a letter home, (2) the visit of a relative or friend—both of which events only occurred at intervals of six months, and even then were conditional, as they depended upon freedom from "reports" for breaches of discipline, etc., etc., etc.—and (3) the pleasure of the bath, which was enjoyed every fortnight.

In this connection I should say that, although many grave evils existed—and do still exist—in our penal establishments, the greatest credit should be given to the "convict" (as distinct from the "local") prison authorities for their insistence upon personal cleanliness, so far as the prisoners are concerned. If equal care was taken to ensure cleanliness among some of the subordinate officers, much of the disease which now filters into

the prisons from the officers' quarters would speedily disappear. I have known more than one case in which a certain deadly disease was imported into a prison from the outside.

## CHAPTER V

THE preceding chapter may be taken as a rough outline of the official daily programme, and is as true of one prison as another. A cast iron uniformity runs through the whole prison service, so that the scene enacted at 7.45 this morning in, say, Portland prison is similar in every respect to that which takes place in all other convict prisons throughout the country.

Official programmes, however, do not always represent what actually occurs, and to get at the inner life of a prison one must consult some other authority. No better authority can be made than that of a fair minded,

clear headed ex-convict, who, having passed through the mill himself, is able to give a readable account of his experiences, and who has no interest in misrepresenting facts—whose business it is to tell “ the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

This is the object which I have set before me in this narrative ; and if I have to state unpleasant facts, the only defence I can give is that they *are* facts. It is the special function of a historian to deal with facts and not with fiction.

One of the most disagreeable facts which a “ faithful chronicler ” has to report in connection with our convict prisons is that the *human* element has no place in such establishments.

A bold, heartless, “ hide bound ” system—which has been described by Sir Edmund Du Cane as being so artificial that it imposes upon all under it a state of existence totally opposed to that which nature has set up as the necessary condition of moral, mental, and physical health—dominates and

governs our whole penal economy. Feelings, temperament, affections, have no place in the lifeless code of "rules and regulations" under which more than a hundred thousand human beings are at this moment suffering in England.

Here are some of the results of this inhuman state of things.

"B 41"—a young man who had been implicated in a post office robbery, for which seven men were sent into penal servitude for terms ranging from five to fourteen years—heard of his mother's death whilst he was a prisoner at Chatham station.

He was an only son, and his conviction was practically the cause of his mother's death. She broke her heart over it.

Some efforts were made to induce the Home Office authorities to allow the son to attend the funeral of his mother, but without avail. I saw the young fellow on the morning previous to the funeral, and he then seemed to me to be stricken with

remorse, and almost beside himself in consequence of his mother's death.

It was indeed painful to witness his distress, and I made an application to the Governor with a view of obtaining a special "permit" from the Home Office—a thing which has been done before and since—to allow him to follow his mother to the grave.

Instead of manifesting any sympathy, the Governor stormed and raged at me, saying that I "should have been reported and punished" for talking to the prisoner at all.

"Well, sir," I replied, "you can punish me how you like, but I cannot help telling you that if the public knew the facts of this case I am quite sure they would insist upon the proper thing being done."

"The proper thing! What do you mean by talking to me in that way? You shall be reported to-morrow for talking to another prisoner and for insolence."

Sure enough I was reported next day, and rewarded for my kindly



intentions by being sentenced to ten days' "bread and water" diet, the loss of all class privileges, and the forfeiture of eighty-four marks, which represented eleven days' additional imprisonment.

"B 41" was not allowed to see the dead body of his aged mother carried off from the old home, and the thing weighed upon his mind so much that he committed suicide on the same day as that upon which the old lady was buried !

Another tragedy was enacted in the prison, and from a somewhat similar cause, a short time afterwards.

W. Morriss — or Morrison — was undergoing five years' penal servitude for cheque frauds, when he received an intimation that his wife was dying. They had but one child—a baby of two-and-a-half years—and this little thing would, in the event of its mother's death, be thrown upon the parish. This, of course, was unavoidable, as the parties in question were without means. But, had the bowels of com-

passion not been wholly absent from the prison authorities at Whitehall, the father's representations, backed up as they were by the sworn testimony of three witnesses who knew the facts of the case, would have been acted upon, and a visit to the dying wife allowed.

It was *not* allowed. The woman died ; the child was removed to the Union (where it also died shortly afterwards), and, on hearing of both deaths, the unfortunate man himself committed suicide — three human beings immolated on the altar of “ Man's inhumanity to man ! ”

There is—or was quite recently—a lad of about sixteen years confined in Parkhurst prison under sentence of ten years' penal servitude for setting fire to a hay-stack in Derbyshire. I don't say that the sentence was an unjust one, but it was generally considered as being excessively severe.

The boy was one day visited by the chaplain, who informed him that his father had died from the result of an accident. Within two months the

chaplain visited the lad and told him that his mother had died suddenly, that the home was broken up, and his sisters and brothers—four in number—had been put into a home somewhere in Derbyshire.

At first the boy seemed stunned by the news thus conveyed to him ; but he pulled himself together, and it was thought that he would gradually forget his troubles.

One very dark and cold morning in January his cell door was unlocked as usual at 7.45 a.m., to allow him to attend morning prayers in the chapel.

In less than five minutes after, his maimed and bleeding body was picked up from the lower landing and carried on a stretcher to the hospital. He had flung himself over the railings with the view of ending his life.

He recovered from the injuries sustained, and is, I believe, still working out his term of imprisonment. But he owes his life to the skill and attendance of the medical department ; and here I may say that the greatest possible care

and attention is given to every convict who is once admitted to the infirmary. Whatever may be said about other departments, the medical wing is, in most cases which have come under my observation, above suspicion. I would as soon be in a prison hospital as in any other hospital in England.

Of course a distinction is made between cases of accidental injuries and self-mutilation. In the former every possible kindness is shown to the patient. In the latter some very rough treatment is experienced.

I saw two men brought into the hospital at Chatham prison one day. The first was a slater who had fallen from a roof and sustained serious injuries. The other was a young fellow who deliberately put his hand between two trucks and had his thumb nearly torn away.

In the former case the doctors treated the man with the greatest consideration—nothing was too good for him.

In the latter, little or no quarter was

given. The operation which the case required was carried out in a very brutal fashion, and the yells of that man, as the maimed thumb was being cut away, are still ringing in my ears.

In this connection I should say that very few accidents occur in a prison. Out of twenty-one cases in which death has ensued, I have only known two in which the injuries received were the results of accident ; the other nineteen were the results of carelessness or wilful destruction.

The most painful case of suicide which has ever come under my notice was that of a " lifer "—a man under sentence of penal servitude for life.

Henderson was a middle-aged man of a good family and fair prospects. He had, however, a quick passionate temper, and in a fit of fury he one night struck his wife in the breast. The poor woman died, and Henderson was tried on the capital charge, but the jury eventually reduced the charge to one of manslaughter, and he was sentenced to penal servitude for life

by Justice Hawkins (now Lord Brampton).

A "lifer" has to serve twenty years before he can hope to be released ; and Henderson had already served seventeen years when, probably worn out by long privations, he ended his sufferings by self-destruction.

I was coming in to the prison one day, when I saw two warders mopping up a pool of blood on the basement, or lower landing of "A" hall ; and on making inquiries I learned that poor Henderson had flung himself over the railings of the top landing, and, alighting on his head, was almost instantaneously killed.

Within a few weeks of this sad occurrence another prisoner, named M——, hung himself in his cell. I saw him the night before as he took his supper from the warder, in apparent good health and spirits. He had, however, received bad news about his wife earlier in the day, and this so affected him that—as he told the man occupying the next cell—he felt that



he "never could live another week in prison." I saw his dead body removed to the mortuary next day.

There were in old Millbank prison a man and his wife who were undergoing five years each. For two years they lived within a stone's throw of each other, but from the day they entered the prison until the day they left it—on the expiration of their sentence—they never once met.

The odd thing about this pair of convicts was that when they did meet, on the morning of their release, they did not know each other.

Such cases as this are, of course, very rare ; but that there should be one such is symptomatic of one of the most objectionable features of our prison system.

Human nature, however, will assert itself, and the most ingenious devices have been adopted in several prisons known to me by which intercommunication has been kept up through long years of enforced silence and separation.



The most common method, and one that is employed in almost every prison, is to bribe the "screw"—male or female warder—and where a convict or his friends can command the sinews of war, this is always an easy matter, although a very risky one for the official, as it involves immediate dismissal from the service when detected.

I knew two warders who made a tidy income by trafficking in this way, and when the thing was discovered they left the prison service very much better off than they entered it, although neither was receiving more than 25s. per week as pay, and both had families to support.

We had no less than nine warders at Chatham prison, each one of whom was deep in this illicit traffic ; but so cleverly did they arrange matters that they baffled every attempt made to bring guilt home to them.

When those men undertook to do anything for a prisoner they charged him fifty per cent. on all amounts sent by his friends, and in providing him

with food, liquor, tobacco, etc., etc., they had a regular scale of charges. Thus half a pound of tobacco would cost 10s. 6d., a flask of spirits 10s., and so on; whilst the charge for writing a "stiff"—i.e., a letter—was, by some strange freak of fortune, put down at 6s. 8d.—a solicitor's fee for a similar, but legitimate transaction!

In my next chapter I shall relate a few incidents which will show that there is a humorous and a pathetic, as well as a sordid and avaricious side to this clandestine connection between the prisoner and his gaoler.

## CHAPTER VI

A YOUNG woman named Laura Banks was undergoing three years' penal servitude at Millbank prison when I was there. Her husband was a mechanic, and received good wages at Doulton's pottery works, which are situated almost directly opposite to the spot upon which the old prison stood.

Whether or not the woman was guilty of the offence for which she was sent into penal servitude, I, of course, cannot say, but her husband believed her innocent, and tried for a long time to have her case re-opened. Finding all his efforts on her behalf

unavailing, he decided upon making a dead-lift to get her out of prison by the help of some of the officials.

Being a thrifty man, he had £100 or more at his command, and armed with ten five-pound Bank of England notes, he one night waylaid one of the wardresses—a young woman who had not been long in the service—and practically bought her over.

Night after night this man used to stand on Vauxhall Bridge awaiting the opportunity which never came. The wardress was willing enough to aid Mrs. Banks' pre-arranged attempt to escape ; but, being an inferior officer, she never had the power of doing much in that way.

After six months of anxious hopes and disappointments, the husband abandoned the idea of getting his wife out of prison, and had to fall back upon the next best thing—from his point of view—to wit, making her prison life as comfortable as he could.

This was easy enough, seeing that the wardress—to whom he gave ten

shillings per week during the whole of his wife's imprisonment—was in charge of the ward in which the prisoner was confined ; and beyond the loss of liberty, with all that it implies, so far from her imprisonment injuring her in any way, she assured me afterwards that no two years in her whole life passed more rapidly or more pleasantly than those spent in Millbank prison !

I grant that this is an exceptional case, the average experience being of quite a different nature—and something after the following :

Two men, who had long been accomplices in crime, so arranged matters on reaching the “public works” station that they were companions during the greater part of their imprisonment.

Neither had any money, but both had a considerable amount of property—the proceeds of several burglaries—stowed away in a subterranean passage near London Fields. They could not, of course, get at the “stuff” themselves, but a friendly “screw”

undertook to fish it up for them, and for some eighteen months all things worked well enough, the "screw" receiving the usual fifty per cent. of the money obtained by pledging the stolen goods.

One luckless day the "screw's" assistant attempted to pawn a gold watch at one of the best offices in London—Attenborough's—but in consequence of the usual notice, printed daily by the police and left at all pawnbrokers, the watch was identified as part of a jewel robbery which had taken place some time before in Bayswater.

The man was detained at the office until the police had been communicated with, and then the whole story came out. The peccant "screw" was at first merely suspended ; but on the facts coming to light he was at once dismissed the service, and narrowly escaped criminal prosecution.

The two men were brought up from the prison, tried—in connection with this very burglary—at the County of

London Sessions, and were sentenced to three years' additional imprisonment.

Until quite recently it was generally the custom of the Criminal Department not to proceed against a prisoner who was undergoing penal servitude on his release from prison, unless the case upon which they could re-arrest him was of a very serious character, so that a term of penal servitude wiped out all previous undiscovered offences, and gave the man a "clean sheet" on the expiration of his sentence.

It is not so now. The Commissioner of Police may—and very often does—order the re-arrest of a convict on his release from prison, and in this connection I had a rather singular experience myself.

In the winter of '91 I was very hard pushed, and after several vain efforts to obtain employment, criminally committed myself.

Hearing that a warrant had been issued for my arrest, I bolted from London and sought work in Leeds.



Not being able to get work, and feeling that if I was to be taken at all, one "might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb," I went in for the thing rather heavily, and as my *modus operandi* was well known to the police, I was identified as being connected with every case of the kind which reached the ears of Scotland Yard.

The consequence was that I had to shift my quarters at least once a week, and in this way went through almost all the provincial towns, getting what I could from each, knowing that the "limbs o' the law" were on my track in every place I went to.

When I visited a town, the first thing I did was to go about from office to office in search of work, and when I had exhausted my resources in fruitless efforts to obtain an honest living I recruited them by falling back upon the old illegitimate dodge. It is, I suppose, the case of many who, wishing to do right, are often driven to do wrong.

I one day had the good luck to be

employed at a printing office in Birmingham, and giving up my evil courses, I worked away there for nearly three weeks with great success. Indeed, my employer told me that, as my work was so satisfactory, he intended to hand me over a department to manage as soon as the man then in charge of it had retired, as his state of health necessitated his leaving.

I was fast asleep one morning about 5.30 a.m., at my "diggings," when I was aroused by the tramp of heavy boots coming up the stairs leading from the kitchen to my bed-room, and before I could realise my position I was pounced upon by two police officers, who informed me that they held warrants for my arrest, and that I must go with them there and then to the police station.

Of course I saw at once that I was laid by the heels, and knowing that I should have to "face the music" on several charges, I made a clean breast of it when brought before the magistrate.

I was committed for trial at the

ensuing assizes, and in due course stood in the dock before one of H.M. judges on the serious charge of forging cheques.

I was unable to secure legal assistance, and the prosecutors were well represented by the gentlemen in wigs and gowns ; indeed, there seemed but slight chance of my escaping a long term of imprisonment.

However, I made the most of my defence ; drew up a written statement embodying all the circumstances under which I committed myself, and enumerating all the offences of which I had been guilty.

The judge read this written defence of mine with great patience, and intimated his intention of postponing sentence until the last day of the assizes, I having been brought up on the first day.

I had some hopes that the facts stated in my paper would be investigated, as in that case a distinction might be made between a man who was driven to crime unwillingly, after

many efforts to get his living honestly, and one who plunges into crime voluntarily and because he prefers it to honest methods.

“ The first shall be last ! ” I was the first prisoner placed in the dock when the assizes opened on the Monday, and the very last man called up at the close of the assizes on the following Saturday.

The court was packed, and I learned afterwards that everyone expected a highly sensational ending to a case which had excited more than ordinary interest in the Midlands.

The case had a sensational ending ; but not in the way expected by the provincials. Personally, I had quite prepared myself for the worst, and in my imagination figured myself as being a doomed man. Anything short of being hung, drawn, and quartered would not have surprised me that morning. When all the other cases had been disposed of, the judge turned to where I was sitting, and I immediately stood up at the “ bar,” from which

—as the reflection flashed through my mind at the time—many had gone to the scaffold.

Adjusting his pince-nez, and looking steadily at me for fully five minutes—during which a grave-like silence in the court made itself felt—his lordship administered a lecture which I shall never forget ; and when he had given me a sound drubbing he turned to the jury box, and addressing the occupants, made use of those, to me, memorable words—

“ Gentlemen, I am not going to send this man back to the hapless, hopeless life of a convict prison. I have made inquiries, and am satisfied of the truth of the statements which the prisoner has made here,” holding up my sheet of foolscap containing the only defence I had to offer, “ and that being so, consider that the justice of the case will be met by sending him to prison for four calendar months on each of the four charges—*the sentences to run concurrently.*”

As I stood in that dock, half dazed

at the leniency shown, I was conscious that there was a suppressed exclamation of surprise rising from different parts of the court, and on being taken to the cells underneath the court-house, a warder seized my hand and shook it vigorously. "Never heard of such a thing in my life," said this rough but kindly janitor.

Everyone was surprised, as only those who are familiar with the brutal sentences which used to be passed upon prisoners could fully appreciate such a sentence, and on my removal from the court-house to the county gaol I was again congratulated on what people chose to call "good luck."

I have my own ideas about the causes which operated on that occasion, and enabled a painstaking judge to arrive at a rational conclusion. This, however, is not the place to go into such matters. Let me rather return to the point which led to this digression—the all too common practice of re-arresting prisoners whom the police may consider have not been suffi-



ently punished, on the expiration of their sentences.

When I had completed my four months' punishment, and just as I was about to leave the local gaol, I was privately informed that two detectives were waiting for me at the prison gate.

Having admitted all the offences I was guilty of when before the judge, I took it for granted that the sentence then imposed covered all my delinquencies, and I believe that such was the intention of the judge himself.

The police, however,—especially the provincial police—have a way of their own, and can snap their fingers, so to say, at the intentions of any judge. If they think a prisoner has got off too lightly, and they wish to get rid of him, it is quite within their power to re-arrest him at the prison gate and charge him again with an offence which he may have—as in my case—acknowledged in open court ; but which he has not been specifically charged with before.

This is precisely what happened



when my four months' imprisonment had expired. I was told that I should be taken to Leeds, and there put upon my trial for an offence which they knew I had admitted at the Birmingham Assize, and in face of which the judge had passed sentence.

There was, of course, nothing for it but to knuckle under to the "gentlemen in blue," and I was taken to Leeds, brought before the Mayor, protested that I had already been punished for the offence I was then charged with, and—well, again committed for trial at the next assizes.

After lying in the local gaol for a full month, the judge opened the assizes ; and when placed in the dock I handed him a plain, brief history of the case from my point of view.

Bundling up all the papers in front of him he gave them to the clerk of arraigns to transmit across the court to me, and then exclaimed, in no very mild manner—"I have had to complain of this kind of thing before. Who is responsible for this prosecution ? "

An elderly barrister rose and said he was instructed by the police to prosecute, and as there were several charges against the prisoner, he requested his lordship to make an example of the accused then and there.

The judge turned upon the barrister with an expressive frown, and briefly reciting the gist of my written statement, asked the learned gentleman what he had to say as to the action of the police.

The learned gentleman seemed nonplussed for a moment, and the judge, without waiting for a reply to his question, exclaimed—

“The prisoner is discharged ; and if he should be again molested in connection with any of those charges which my learned brother was cognisant of when he passed sentence upon him at Birmingham, I shall disallow the costs of this prosecution.”

After such a strong expression of opinion from the bench I naturally concluded that I would—as, indeed, I

should—have been released on the spot.

Instead of this being done I was taken down to the cells and placed once more under lock and key !

I thought, however, that too much publicity had been given to the case to allow of any further proceedings, and I was soon deep in the bundles of papers which had been handed to me from the bench.

On looking over them I found a letter from the Chief Constable of Birmingham to the Chief Constable of Leeds, which contained the following announcement.

“ We have a prisoner here named ——. He is to be discharged from gaol to-morrow ; but if you want him I shall have him detained here until you send down for him.”

Just as I was reading this precious document the cell door was unlocked, and the detective who was in charge of the case came in and demanded the letter, which, he said, was handed to me in mistake.

Giving it to him, he inquired whether or not I had read it.

"Of course I have read it, and am thankful that I have had such light thrown on your methods."

"Well, it was not my fault, I am only obeying orders."

"Granted. But who authorised your chief to have me re-arrested and imprisoned for a whole month upon a charge which you now know should not have been made?"

"Well, I have nothing to do with that; you must tackle him, not me."

"Right again. But you can easily understand that I feel a little bit sore over the thing, and as I can't get at him, I must question you as being his representative."

"I have nothing to say further. If I was ordered to arrest the first man I met in the street I should do so, if I could."

"But suppose you could not?"

"Well, if I couldn't take him I should have to let him go, and, like

the man in the play, thank God I was rid of a rascal ! ”

“ Very good, young man. You are a credit to your cloth ; but what are you going to do with me now ? ”

“ We are not going to do anything with you. We have done with you since you have been discharged ; but I understand that there is someone coming up from Holyhead to bring you down there.”

“ What ! After all that passed in court to-day ? ”

“ Well, you see, we have nothing to do with that. You are free so far as we are concerned ; but if others have anything against you, of course you have to deal with them. Good-bye, I wish you luck.”

Late that (Saturday) evening I was taken to Holyhead, and after passing another miserable Sunday in prison, was charged on the following Monday morning with another of the offences which I had previously been punished for, and in respect of which a judge of the High Court had publicly declared

that I should not again be brought into the dock.

The magistrate who presided on the bench would not listen to my representations, but advised me to explain matters to the Recorder, and he there and then committed me for trial at the ensuing sessions, which fortunately opened on that same day.

Then, brought before the Recorder, I respectfully declined to enter any plea to the charge brought against me, saying that I had already been punished on account of it.

It is probable enough that the Recorder may have thought that I was insane, as he also pooh-poohed my representations and ordered my removal to the cells.

But later on that evening I was again brought up to the court, and having in the interim had an opportunity of formulating my views and circumstances in writing, I handed up the paper to his lordship, requesting him to read it.

It was a mere repetition of the



statement made to the judge at the Leeds assize, with a brief *resumé* of my subsequent experience added. But the Recorder appeared to be unable at first to make head or tail of the case, and, looking inquiringly at his clerk and then at the prosecuting barrister, he was about to say something, when a gentleman whom I had never seen before stepped up to the bench and handed the judge a long strip of printed matter, which looked like a cutting from some newspaper.

Having read the contents, the Recorder rose from the bench and summoned his clerk, the person who gave him the paper, the prosecuting counsel and the Governor of the prison—who was then seated in a little recess near the dock—into his private room.

The consultation lasted about ten minutes, during which time every eye in the court was turned towards the dock, at the rail of which I stood awaiting the result of the private conference in the judge's room.



Presently the tall, gaunt figure of the prison Governor stepped out from the side wing of the bench, and, making straight for the dock, whispered in my ear—

“You had better plead guilty, and you will get off with a week’s imprisonment.”

He had barely uttered the words “week’s imprisonment” when the Recorder himself came on to the bench, exclaiming, “A day, a day.”

I knew at once what that meant, and desiring only my freedom, I pleaded guilty, was sentenced to one day’s imprisonment, and ten minutes later was walking down the streets of Holyhead—a free man.

## CHAPTER VII

### TRAFFICKING : HOW IT IS DONE

IN the *Daily Chronicle* of this date, September 15th, 1902, attention is called to the "Report of the Prison Commissioners" for the year ending March 31st, and on looking over that "Report" we find that, so far from crime being on the decrease, it is rising by leaps and bounds.

It was only the other day that a sessional judge, in addressing the jury, congratulated them—and the country at large—on what he was pleased to call the "diminution of crime."

This is a hoary old fiction, which has

to my knowledge been promulgated regularly during the past thirty years—in fact ever since the present prison system came into force.

But now up starts a body of men who would be only too pleased to verify this loudly proclaimed diminution of crime—if they could—but who are forced to make confessions which effectually cut the ground from under the feet of the very system which they represent, and which an annual tissue of lies has alone kept the breath of life in for the past twenty years.

Here is the way in which crime is diminishing :—

“ Including court-martial prisoners, 195 more prisoners were sentenced to penal servitude, and 17,163 to terms of imprisonment, during the past year than during the previous year.”

In other words, so far from crime being on the decrease, there were between 17,000 and 18,000 more convictions for crime this year than last !

The student of penology, or he who, like the prisoner, has gone "through the mill," has known the real state of affairs for years, and so patent has it been to me that I should not have called further attention to it had it not been for the amazing statement which follows the figures I have just quoted.

Whilst admitting this increase of crime, the Prison Commissioners go on to say that—

*"It is impossible, after careful inquiry, to assign any specific cause for this increase!"*

It does not require a very keen, critical acumen to perceive that, as a logical sequence, it follows that either (1) there has been no careful inquiry at all, or (2) that those whose duty it is to make such inquiry are utterly unfit for the function.

The plain fact is this : Our present prison system is a failure. It manufactures crime instead of suppressing it, and the Commissioners themselves practically admit this when they say later on in their "Report," or are

made to say by those who report the "Report"—

"A recent census of the penal servitude population showed that out of 2876 convicts, no less than 1342 had been previously sentenced to penal servitude, or to three or more terms of imprisonment for serious crimes."

If this means anything, it means that the machinery responsible for such results is worthless.

Leaving statistics and reports—which, it may be taken for granted, put things in the most favourable light—let us consult one or two ex-convicts who have themselves been in prison more than once, and who may therefore be taken as specimens of the fruit produced—to the number of nearly 200,000 in a single year—by our precious system.

I was at work in the stone quarries at Portland one day, when a very intelligent man named Wharton was sent to work at the same stone at which I was hacking and hewing.

In a local prison no one can tell,

from external appearances, whether or not the man with whom you may be working is an old "lag" (convict) or a "first-timer" (one undergoing his first sentence).

But in a convict prison it is quite different. When a man is sentenced to penal servitude, his register number (the year in which he was convicted) and the sentence he is undergoing are affixed to the sleeve of his jacket and to the side of his cap, so that anyone standing beside him can tell whether he is an old hand or a new one.

When Wharton joined me at the stone frame I saw at once that he had been in penal servitude before, as his register was "7 E," showing that he was convicted in 1872, and subsequently in 1878.

When we had become intimate enough to justify personal observations, I expressed the surprise I felt at seeing a man like him undergoing a second term of penal servitude. A highly educated man, he had besides

two good trades at his finger ends. He was a born mason, and a better draughtsman there was not in the prison.

With a grim, sardonic smile and a curl of his lip he turned upon me and broke out in something after this style—the actual words used I cannot now recall ; but they were, as near as possible, as follows—

“ My dear fellow, what’s the use of you or others talking in that way ? I was a fairly straight man when I got my first sentence (which was on a charge of manslaughter), but by G——, after what I have seen and heard in prison, I have become so hardened that I don’t care a d—— what I do ! ”

I believe that Wharton only spoke as he felt. The demoralising effect of enforced association with the scum of the earth had vitiated his character, and converted a naturally fair minded man into an unscrupulous criminal.

The same result was brought about in a young fellow named Hayes—then under sentence of seven years—but in



a different way. He had already served three years and nine months when he was discharged from prison ; but having to report himself monthly to the police, he one day met one of his old prison chums coming out of the police station as he was going into it.

Both adjourned to an adjoining "boozer," and over a pot of ale related the story of their struggles to keep things going. Neither had yet obtained work, and both were rather closely shadowed by the police. What was to be done ?

Putting their heads together, they decided to go up to the prison on the following morning, when a very smart pickpocket, whose acquaintance they made in prison, was to be released.

Within twenty-four hours of that man's release the three prison-made thieves were looking round the town to see what they could "pick up"—in plain language, to see what they could steal. And yet one of them—young Hayes—had never been engaged in that line of business before.

His first term of imprisonment initiated him into the mysteries of the cracksmen's craft, and he became shortly afterwards an expert burglar. So much for the efficacy of our penal economy as a preventive of crime!

I was deeply immersed in a French grammar one evening in my cell, when a violent scratching upon the corrugated iron partition which divides one cell from another attracted my attention. I should have stated that when a prisoner wished to have a quiet chat with his neighbour o' nights he would signify his wish by scratching in the way mentioned. Should his friend next door reciprocate the desire, they would place their ears and mouths, in turn, to a small hole which the ingenuity of previous occupants had enabled them to bore in the iron partition, and talk away to their hearts' content.

On the occasion referred to, my neighbour had an important item of news to communicate. The man in the cell on the other side of him had just then made a desperate attempt

on his life by hacking his throat in a shocking manner with his tin knife, which he had sharpened for the purpose.

As it was then late at night—a miserably cold winter's night—nothing would have been known of this occurrence until the following morning, had not a stream of blood flowed out under the cell door and on to the landing, where it was noticed by the night officer.

Aid was at once summoned, and the would-be suicide removed to the hospital just in the nick of time to save his life, for had he been left in his cell another hour he must have bled to death. In due time this man recovered, but it would have been as well if he had not been brought round, since he subsequently made another and more successful attempt in a precisely similar way, the instrument used being a piece of glass instead of the knife, which was taken from him after his first essay at throat cutting.

The authorities have been pulled to

pieces over and over again for allowing men of a homicidal or suicidal tendency the means of killing themselves or others. A more frivolous complaint could scarcely be made ; since (1) how *are* the authorities to know that a man is going to kill until the thing is done ? They—not being omniscient, any more than their critics—have no means of prevention or, rather, intervention ; and (2) when they have deprived the would-be homicide or suicide of every weapon likely to be used in inflicting injury, there are still a number of ways open which do not require the proverbial ingenuity of the “ crank ” to discover.

I knew a man at Chatham who was loaded with chains to prevent him doing mischief to himself or others. He used those very chains to strangle himself !

Another artist in slaughter was placed in a barge on the Medway to keep him out of danger. The gang working on this barge was a dredging party.

Everything was done to prevent any of those men doing injury to them-

selves or others. One fine morning a certain member of this gang—whose name I cannot now recall—was found dead.

He had succeeded in poisoning himself, eating a mussel which had been dredged up from the river, and which, as a fishmonger—the calling he followed when a free man—he knew to be poisonous.

The utmost care was taken to hedge in and fence around a once well known lawyer who had got into difficulties, and was sent to expiate his offences at Chatham. This man evinced a dislike of all the care and attention paid to him ; but, being unable to induce the gaolers to “ mind their own business ”—his favourite way of putting the case—he made several attempts to save himself from his “ friends ” ; but all to no purpose.

One afternoon, however, he had occasion to go to the lavatories, and here a bright idea seemed to strike him—suggested, no doubt, by the fact of one of the drains being then under

repair, and consequently in a disjointed condition.

Of course, it is possible that he may have meditated the move—which we all thought was spontaneous—for some time, and watched the opportunity to make it.

Anyhow, the warder in charge of the landing, thinking that he was longer than necessary in the lavatory, set out in quest of him ; but instead of finding his man, found only a jacket, trousers and vest, all of which were carefully folded up and placed behind the door.

A glance at the disjointed pan in one of the closets showed at once how matters stood. The bird whom they had taken such pains to cage had flown. But where could he have got to ? the reader may well ask—where indeed ?

It sounds almost incredible ; but it is a fact. That man, skilled in the law as he was, was as ignorant as a baby in the construction of drains.

Having probably a vague notion that



any hole was good enough to enable him to escape from prison, and seeing a tidy sized hole there in front of him, he scrambled into it and succeeded in getting into the main drain pipe, where, no doubt, he had anything but a delicious quarter of an hour !

It was easy enough to get into that particular drain ; but how to get out of it ? It led to—heaven knows where. Anyhow, there was not much time left for contemplation ; the janitors were on his track. They, however, were all too corpulent—perhaps also too dainty to go through the pipe—and a slim convict was sent after the fugitive.

This man had been furnished with a rope intended to slip over the foot of the “ guy,” and as there was no going forward, another rope was attached to *his* foot, so that when he gave the signal that he had his man in tow, the warders, holding the end in their hands, pulled away at the pursuer, who in turn pulled at the pursued, and in this way both were brought back to the starting point.



But oh! the condition in which they were brought back baffles description. The slim one did not suffer much, to be sure; but the lawyer was covered from head to foot with what Lord Palmerston once called "matter in the wrong place."

From that day he became a law abiding member of the criminal community; but a new item was added to his long list of grievances—his olfactory nerve was seriously impaired. Indeed, he assured me that, day or night, he could never get the stench of that drain off his brain-pan!

## CHAPTER VIII

### REFORMATION : THE DIFFICULTIES PLACED IN THE PATH OF

THERE is sometimes an element of tragedy, comedy, or farce connected with attempts to rid one's self of the trammels and associations with a prison, and to be able to breathe God's free air without let or hindrance.

I have known of at least a score of such attempts, and this chapter seems to be the proper place to record a few of them.

Memory carries me back as far as the sixties, when the famous Head Centre of the Fenian Brotherhood

made his escape from Harold's Cross prison in Dublin. Since then hundreds have tried to follow the example of James Stephens ; but very few indeed have done the job so clean as he, and even he could not have done it but for the connivance of prison officials.

Many cases have occurred in various convict prisons of late years, but I doubt whether there were any—certainly not more than two—which created such a profound sensation in the prison department as that of the man Hearne, who broke out of the then newly erected convict prison at Wormwood Scrubbs.

Hearne was confined on the top landing of a new wing, where the same facility for escape did not exist as might have been found in other parts of the prison ; and to make matters more difficult, he had to drop a distance of something like eighty to a hundred feet.

He had for some time been hard at work in dislodging a brick from the end wall of his cell, and having accom-

plished this formidable task, he got out the ventilator—a perforated piece of iron plate inserted in the wall for the purpose of admitting a current of fresh air—and one very stormy night, when the noise of creaking timber, slamming doors and falling tiles drowned the sounds which his operations occasioned, he completed his work by making an orifice in the outer brick wall large enough to admit his body passing through.

This done, he tore up his bed clothes, and making a fairly stiff rope of them, he fastened one end to a cell utensil which was too big to pass through the hole, and thus secured a tight grip at that end.

Then, still clinging to his improvised rope, he passed through the hole and let himself down from that lofty height to the ground.

At dawn next morning the remains of the clothes rope, which the storm had spared, was seen by the civil guard on duty round the prison, dangling from the big gap in the wall

above. The alarm was at once raised, and search parties were sent out in all directions. But the bird was off many hours before, and until last year I never heard one say that he was recaptured. At all events—although I don't believe that Hearne was ever recaptured—if he was hunted down, it was not until many years after the night of his daring escape from Wormwood Scrubbs prison.

As I am not observing any chronological order in these memoirs, I might as well relate another remarkable story of escape from the same prison whilst I was an inmate of it, although it did not occur until many years after that just mentioned.

The whole Protestant community of the place was assembled in the chapel one Sunday morning at Divine service. It was about 10.30 a.m., and the chaplain was half way through his sermon, when the chief warder was seen to rise from his seat near the communion rails and beat a hasty retreat from the building in the direction of the kitchen and bakehouse.

This was a very unusual proceeding, and attracted the attention of every member of the congregation. Some old hands sitting behind me seemed to understand that something special was up, as one of them exclaimed, in a low tone of course, "By Jingo, summat 'as gone wrong, Jim."

"No fears, Tom," replied his neighbour, "the old man 'ad a drop too much over night, an' is taken suddenly bad."

"Don't believe it," says Tom. "He smells a rat. There's summat wrong I tell ye."

And Tom was right. Summat *was* wrong. Before five minutes had passed the old chief came back, in a terrible state of excitement, and going straight within the communion rails, walked up the steps of the pulpit and began tugging at the chaplain's vestments. For a moment the rev. gentleman, who, no doubt, was so taken up with his discourse that he was oblivious to all other matters going on underneath him, took no notice of this abrupt

intrusion upon his occupation, but continued his sermon. It was not, however, a time for trifling, and the chief made no bones about the matter.

Walking right into the pulpit, he whispered a few hasty words into the chaplain's ear, and at that moment the bell at the front gate began to ring as it only rings when a prisoner has escaped.

Of course we all knew the meaning of that unwonted ringing during Divine service. Someone had "done a guy"—escaped.

The sermon was brought to an abrupt conclusion, a strong posse of officials was sent in from the outside, and when we had all been marched back to our cells and placed securely under lock and key, the chase after the missing man was taken up with vigour.

The fugitive on this occasion was a baker, and as he was a good conduct man in the prison, was left alone on that Sunday morning to attend to the distribution of bread for the Sunday's dinner.



Seizing his opportunity, this man, who was an ex-convict and had some eighteen months more to serve, decided upon making a dash for freedom. Getting possession of the key of the ladder shed, he hauled out a ladder sufficiently long to reach the top of one of the outer walls and having donned a suit of white overalls—generally used by bakers—he mounted the wall and dropped on the off side, landing on the grass, and got clear away as far as the railway sheds, which are situated quite close to the prison.

It had been arranged that some friends of the prisoners were to have been on the spot with a suit of clothes, and had they been there, there was little doubt but that the prisoner would have made good his escape.

As it was they did not turn up, and the disappointed runaway found there was nothing for it but to stow himself in one of the railway trucks until darkness should enable him to go on to East London—from whence he hailed—

in something like safety, as the appearance of a man walking through the streets in broad daylight, and on a Sunday morning, with a baker's outfit, would certainly attract attention.

Getting into one of the loaded trucks, he covered himself with tarpaulin, and hoped thus to evade detection. But once put upon the scent, the pursuers tracked him, and eventually seized him in his hiding place. It took, however, some hours to find him, and it was quite three o'clock before he was again brought back to the prison and placed in the punishment cells.

For this attempt the "guy" suffered sixteen days' punishment, the loss of all privileges, and three months' additional imprisonment.

Whilst on the subject of escapes, I will relate a few which came under my observation in the convict service, and some of which were of a highly amusing character.

The two attempts made by Peace and that of the Birdwells I have

already mentioned ; but it may be remembered that in both cases the aid of prison officials had been previously secured. That both proved abortive shows that in this, as in other enterprises, the best laid plans oft go awry, and I have known some of the most successful escapes effected by those who worked single-handed.

Such was the case of Williams, who, breaking away from Chatham, dashed into the river, and swimming across to Rochester, got clear away before he was missed from the prison.

Of course the great difficulty in having to take to the water prevents hundreds from breaking loose who would otherwise do so. When a man reaches the opposite bank, and has to stow himself away (perhaps in a cellar, as many have done), the track left by his dripping clothing often betrays him, and I suppose that it is mainly because of the difficulty thus made that our chief convict prisons have been built upon an island—such as Chatham, Portland, and Parkhurst.

The following happened at Parkhurst prison. A young Irishman, who had almost completed his sentence and would soon have been released on licence, took it into his head that rather than comply with the terms of his licence—which involved reporting himself monthly to the police—he would forego that remission of the sentence which he had earned while in custody and work out the whole term in the prison.

By doing this he would have to serve another three months' imprisonment; but at the end of that time he would leave the establishment a free man, and not a ticket-of-leave man, as is the case with all convicts who have earned any remission of sentence.

Having made up his mind to forfeit the three months to which he was entitled, he cast about for the best means of effecting his object. There were two ways in which the thing might be done; to wit, he could attack some officer or fellow prisoner—in

which case he might possibly have received the birch—or he could “do a guy,” in other words, he might make a bogus attempt to escape. He chose the latter course.

Working in the fields surrounding the prison, he watched his opportunity, and while the “screw” was occupied in counting the work tools one evening, he slipped away unobserved by the other members of the party—to one of whom he had revealed his design—and before he was missed had a wider space than he wished between himself and his pursuers.

The alarm was at once given, the great gate bell rang out the warning note, and as it was heard by everyone for miles around, and a reward is given to any person not an official who captures a runaway, the whole countryside was up and out on the war-path.

Making a detour, the fugitive rushed across some fields in a direction which he knew would lead him into the officers’ private quarters. Of course,

such tactics were never dreamt of by the officials, who were in complete ignorance as to the man's real object, and took it for granted that it was a genuine "guy."

When the Irishman reached the quarters, he found it denuded of male officials—all had gone off in an opposite direction—but the wife of one officer, on seeing the fugitive approach, threw herself across his path, and although the man might have thrown her aside, had he chosen to do so, he ran right into her arms and surrendered to her!

The lady led her willing captive towards the prison, on the way to which some officials met her and took over her prisoner, who was shortly afterwards tried by the visiting director and sentenced, among other things, to the forfeiture of three months' remission marks—the identical thing his escapade was intended to bring about!

Within a month or two of this fiasco at Parkhurst another absurd attempt

was made by what, in view of the late commissioner's report, I may call a "juvenile-adult," whatever that may mean.

There is no doubt whatever in my mind as to the insanity of the subject of this narrative. He was not sufficiently mad to warrant his transfer to Broadmoor—the criminal lunatic asylum—but he was on the road to qualify for that institution.

Taking advantage of a sudden and heavy downpour of rain, this man got round the corner of a shed erected for the purpose of protecting officers and prisoners from storms like that which had then set in. Whilst everyone was engaged mopping themselves, he set out across the fields at the rear of the shed and made for the angle of two walls bounding the north side of the prison.

At certain points about the walls a civil guard, with loaded rifle, stands ready to shoot down any prisoner attempting to pass him. On this occasion the civil guard was in the



sentry box, which I suppose the would-be "guy" could not see, and watched the fellow coming across the fields in a drenching rain.

Waiting until his man got within a few yards of the box, he stepped out, and the "juvenile-adult" found himself under cover of the guard's rifle, a rather trying position.

In answer to the question, "Where are you going?" the flabbergasted "guy" coolly replied, "I'm going home; where are you going?"

"I'm going to take you home or send you home, for I think you have lost your way," and with this the sentry seized his unfortunate prisoner and clapped a pair of "darbies"—handcuffs—upon his wrists, placed him inside his sentry box and started a fine old tune on his whistle.

By this time the warder from whose charge the man had slipped away realised that he had lost one of his sheep, whereupon he also blew away on his whistle, the shrill strains of which were speedily taken up and re-

echoed from one part of the island to the other.

Meanwhile the new "guy" seemed to enjoy the general hub-bub, and smilingly remarked to his captors as they marched him back to the prison : " You must be a bally lot of fools to come rushing about in the wet like this, when you might have been at home——"

" Shut up, you barmy idiot," replied an irascible old warder, who did not relish the idea of tramping about in a steady downpour.

" I shan't shut up ! I tell you you are a bally——"

This was as far as the poor "juvenile-adult" could get in his speech, as he was shoved along by a posse of warders who, naturally enough, had no love for this insignificant cause of so much annoyance and discomfort.

The Governors of prisons have no power to deal with cases of this kind, which are always remitted for adjudication to the directors. In this instance a lenient view was taken of the matter,

and excepting the imposition of a parti-coloured dress—grey and yellow—and leg irons, the punishment awarded was little more than nominal.

But if some of those “guys” are farcical, many are attended with very serious results.

At Dartmoor prison, for instance, three men conspired to get away in one of those sudden fogs for which the moor is famous; they put their plans into execution. The point was to get over a certain wall which surrounded the working parties, and which, under ordinary circumstances would not present much difficulty to a daring mind.

When the fog became rather more dense than is thought compatible with the safe custody of prisoners, the warders gathered their respective gangs together, preparatory to returning to the prison. It was whilst thus engaged that the three men made their dash for liberty.

Each provided himself with as much fine sand as his hands could contain,

and at a given signal all three made for the wall which divided them from the wild moorlands, where, in a dense fog, it is just possible that one might be able to get away.

Between the runaways and the wall stood two civil guards with loaded rifles, and approaching these stealthily, the sand was flung right into the officers' faces, nearly blinding one for the time, and wholly confusing the other.

The latter, however, recovered himself, and turning in the direction of the wall, saw the dim outlines of two men climbing over it. In another moment the men would have disappeared ; indeed, one had already got over and was lost to sight.

It was, I take it, impossible at such a moment to take deliberate aim at any particular part of the body—a prison official is not allowed to aim at any vital part, the object being to disable, but not to kill the prisoner fired at—and thus it happened that, when two shots had rang out, the two men

were seen to fall, one on each side of the wall.

The man who was found lying on his back on the off side of the wall was seriously, but not fatally, injured. The other man was instantly killed, the bullet having passed right through his heart.

## CHAPTER IX

## A SAD PRISON TRAGEDY

TURNING from the attempts made by some convicts whom I knew, to shake off their fetters and defeat the ends of justice by "doing a guy," to those who try to achieve a like result by acting under cover of official privilege, I think it would not be out of place to describe an intrigue which resulted in the ruin of a high official, the death of a lady, and the insanity of a prisoner.

To avoid giving unnecessary pain to the relatives of the chief actors in this tragic event I purposely suppress

their names and locations, but the facts I am now about to relate can be verified by others who were well acquainted with them.

W. R.—, a solicitor in good practice in London, was sentenced at the Old Bailey to seven years' penal servitude for misappropriation of trust funds, and after a brief sojourn at Wormwood Scrubbs prison was sent to the Convalescent Home at Parkhurst, where he appears to have got into trouble through trafficking with other prisoners.

Transferred to Portland, he carried on the same illicit traffic. He was again severely punished, and was removed to D— prison.

His wife, who was no doubt a party to the "deals" with the warders at "the Scrubbs" and Portland prison, visited him every three months, and it was on the occasion of one of those quarterly visits that she, quite accidentally I believe, met the Governor of the prison on board a steamer plying between F—— and D—— prisons.



The lady was a most fascinating woman, and must have made a deep impression upon the mind of the Governor, who was a widower. The acquaintance thus casually made ripened in less than twelve months into friendship, and had it stopped there things would have turned out quite differently.

Unfortunately it did not stop there. The Governor became enamoured of the wife of a convict then in his custody, and I am sorry to have to say that the lady, by her naturally charming character and manners contributed to the result which followed the Governor's culpable attachment to her.

The husband, of course, was ignorant of what was going on ; but in consequence of it he was favoured in many ways by the Governor, who, perhaps thought he could atone for the injustice which he knew he was doing to the one by showing exceptional kindness to the other.

Things went on smoothly for about a year, but at the end of that time it

was noticed by other officials that the Governor and Mrs. R—— were more frequently in each other's company than the official situation required, and a close watch was kept by a hostile warder upon the Governor's movements.

The result was that the intimacy which had existed between them for nearly a year was brought to light, and the hostile warder intended to lay the whole matter before the Home Office authorities.

Such things cannot be done in a corner. Publicity must, sooner or later, be given to them, and by some means the Governor realised that the secret of his attachment to the wife of a convict then in his charge was discovered.

By a little judicious management on both sides the thing might, even when the truth had leaked out, have been hushed up, as many much more important things in connection with the prison service have been kept quiet. But there was no such judicious

management shown by either party "Love," it has been said, "breeds love." Anyhow, it soon became apparent that Mrs. R—— reciprocated the feelings entertained for her by the Governor.

One very dark foggy morning in January, the chief warder sent round to the Governor's house, as was usual, all the letters which had arrived by the first post. But the servant informed the messenger that the Governor had not been home since he left for the prison on the previous evening, and as he was never known to have been absent from his house for a whole night before, a great stir was made, and the general belief was that he had met with an accident.

The hostile warder, however, soon upset the accident theory, and in an interview with the Deputy-Governor disclosed the secret of Captain B——'s connection with Mrs. R——.

Being next in command, the duty of probing this mystery fell upon the "Deputy," who was by no means an

admirer of his superior. But without absolute proof he could not, of course, move in the matter.

Two days were allowed to pass before any action was taken, and not having received the least information which would enable him to act as he desired, and report the matter to the Home Office, he sent for the prisoner, W. R—— and without going into details, gave him special permission to have an interview with his wife, to whom the usual “visiting order” was despatched that afternoon.

Of course the unhappy convict was unable to elicit any reason for this special favour, and his mind was very much upset by vague remarks which the hostile warder made now and again in his hearing.

Four days later the letter containing the visiting order was returned to the prison marked, “Removed, address not known.”

Almost simultaneously with the arrival of this disquieting announcement came the news that the Governor

and a lady answering the description of Mrs. R—— had been seen on the platform of the local railway station, and it was thought had gone up to London together.

Upon the strength of this report the “Deputy” communicated with Whitehall, and advertisements were inserted in most of the papers, inviting information as to the lady’s movements.

The Governor meanwhile had gone to Paris with Mrs. R—— and put up at an hotel in the Rue Rivoli, where they occupied apartments as man and wife.

He appeared to have communicated with the Home Office himself, as another gentleman was shortly afterwards sent to the prison in the capacity of Governor. No official action was taken against the truant, although it was suggested that a warrant should be issued for his apprehension.

When he heard of this suggestion he at once left Paris, and with Mrs. R—— booked for India, where, I understood, he had some property.

Four months passed, and no one in

the prison could get a scrap of information beyond what I have given above. About the end of that time, however, the luckless prisoner, who seemed to take the treachery of his wife to heart, received an intimation that she was dead.

The climate, coupled, one can imagine, with the sense of her guilt, brought on a fever, which carried her off before she had been three months in Bengal, and on hearing of her death, the man whom she had betrayed became delirious, and when I last heard of him he was an inmate of a lunatic asylum.

By a kind of retributive judgment, the ex-Governor subsequently fell a victim to a woman whom he formerly knew in India, and it was said—although I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the statement—that he was seen in London in a destitute condition about three years ago.

I will return to the point at which I began this chapter from, and show how the son of a late well known

metropolitan magistrate abused a privilege granted by the prison rules to defeat the ends of justice.

Young P—— was a most interesting convict, and made himself liked by everyone with whom he came into contact, from the chief warder to the meanest criminal in the prison.

Heso gained on the Deputy-Governor that that individual, who, by the way was an artist, gave him the privilege of framing and mounting certain pictures of considerable value. For some time P—— gave the utmost satisfaction, and passed his time most agreeably.

The Deputy-Governor, however, went for his holidays one summer, and was not expected back for nearly two months, during which time P—— had things pretty much as he wished, there being no one capable of supervising his work.

Amongst those whom he fascinated was an elderly warder, just about to retire on a pension, and he gained such an influence over this official that



nothing was too good for him. Papers, tobacco, ham sandwiches and bottles of whisky were among the luxuries he enjoyed, and it was in connection with the latter that he got into trouble.

I am not quite sure as to the amount of spirits he had consumed on this particular occasion—he afterwards told me that he had drank nearly half a pint that morning, a statement which must be taken *cum grano salis*—anyhow, by ill-luck, the chaplain paid him a visit in the afternoon, and found him, to use his own phrase, “as drunk as a lord.”

Of course the chaplain reported the matter to the Governor, who immediately had the man brought before him, and the interview ended in P——being sent off to the punishment cells.

Later on in that day a strict examination of his cell, working material, etc., led to the discovery of money, cigarettes, love letters, and other miscellanies quite inconsistent with the *genus loci*, and not only so, but a source of strife than which no greater exists in a prison.

Here is another extraordinary case of trafficking.

On a very recent occasion a more than ordinarily conscientious Governor of one of H.M. convict prisons, after many vain attempts to stamp out the practice of trafficking (then largely in vogue in the prison over which he presided), made a special representation in the annual report which all prison Governors are bound to send up to the Home Office.

Instead of giving the Governor a free hand in dealing with the corrupt warders, whom he most properly impeached, the directors, who are not above suspicion of indifference to the real object for which all prisons are established, sent down two of their number to the prison, and as the delegates were not the best of friends with the Governor, they conducted their investigations in a way which a high minded gentleman and conscientious servant of the State could not contemplate without a feeling of contempt.

Instead of sifting the charges brought by the Governor against certain subordinate officers in a fair and open way, the delegates put their heads together, and entered into private correspondence with the guilty parties, and, giving a more willing ear to their misrepresentations than to the plain statement of facts presented by the Governor, they returned to Whitehall, and reported to the Directorial Board that they were unable to discover any reliable evidence of the evil complained of by the Governor, and that the result of their inquiries showed that there was no trafficking carried on by any of the warders in the prison.

Now I am not interested on the side of either the Governor or the directors—my business is to state facts—but, as I spent nearly two years in that particular prison, I know a great deal about it, and can cite at least a score of instances in which trafficking between convicts and their warders has been proved up to the hilt at that very prison.

Here is one such case, and I defy the authorities at Whitehall to contradict it. A middle aged prisoner named H—— was undergoing a sentence of four years' penal servitude for frauds, which created a great sensation throughout the country some little time ago.

Removed to the public works prison from Wormwood Scrubbs, H—— was located in the next cell but one to mine, and on coming in from labour one evening I saw two officers engaged in "turning over" his cell. H—— had by that time been taken to "chokie"; but I could not find out at the time what he had been reported for.

Next day, however, the whole thing came out; someone had, no doubt, given the man away, and suspicion rested on a prisoner working in the same party—a light labour gang.

However that may be, when the case was brought before the Governor on the following day, certain facts were elicited which led to the suspension of the officer in charge of the party to which H—— was attached.

As the Governor considered the case a typical one, and the directors would not again visit the prison for some time, he forwarded all the facts of the case to the board at Whitehall, and so overwhelming was the evidence against the accused parties that, within a few days, the directors sent their decision to the Governor.

H—— was punished by twenty-one days on reduced rations and cellular confinement, the loss of all class privileges for three months, and the forfeiture of a number of marks equivalent to an additional month's imprisonment.

The luckless warder, who was nearly entitled to a pension for life, and had a large family to support, was instantly dismissed the service; and within fourteen days the whole family was reduced to poverty—and all for what?—for a series of venal offences which the directors have since declared did not exist in the prison.

## CHAPTER X

### MICHAEL DAVITT AND OTHER DISTINGUISHED PRISONERS

THE most distinguished prisoner who came under my observation at Portland was a famous Irish Member of Parliament and ex-Fenian, who had, a short time previously, been re-arrested and sent back, on a revoked licence, to complete his original sentence.

Although wearing the prison garb, this gentleman was not treated as an ordinary convict, but enjoyed privileges not granted to the common herd. For instance, he lived alone, in a fairly well

appointed cell in the hospital, where his *menu* was at the discretion of the medical officer, who in this respect has a free hand.

Then again he could employ his time much as he liked, and although I have never seen him so engaged, I believe that he was allowed the use of writing materials, and spent much of his time in keeping a diary.

It is immaterial to the main point (all prisoners are subject to the ordinary rules and regulations) to say that the M.P. was favoured in many particulars. He was so favoured, and it was quite right that he should be. But, on the other hand, he was kept in close confinement, which, after fifteen years' experience, I hold to be the most trying of all punishments.

The only occasion upon which I—not being a Roman Catholic—could see the aforetime Fenian, was when he was at exercise ; and even here he enjoyed an immunity, as he was allowed a particular plot of ground, which he took a great interest in cultivating,



for the ex-Nationalist Member was, and is, an agriculturalist of no mean order. I shall have occasion to mention some peculiar circumstances in connection with this gentleman's prison life later on. For the present I need only mention that he was looked upon with envy by some and with fervent admiration by others. Visited almost daily by the Roman Catholic priest, he was also treated with every consideration by the other heads of departments, and beyond the confinement, I don't think he suffered much from his detention at Portland. Anyhow, when I was favoured with a private interview in the House of Commons—before he resigned his seat—although he spoke of many things in connection with his imprisonment, he did not say one word which might indicate a bitter feeling against the prison authorities on account of ill-treatment.

In marked contrast to the Nationalist's attitude towards prison officials was that of a wealthy ex-member of the Corn Exchange, who

never once ceased to abuse them, from the day I first saw him in the stone quarries until the day he was taken to hospital with a rupture, which, by the way, I then thought, and still think, he brought upon himself purposely in order to evade labour.

This man was, I believe, a well known personage in every town in England. But like another celebrity—of whom I will speak further—was a confirmed “Don Juan,” and with two wives already, he took to himself a third—a lady of rank—and was sent to penal servitude for three years and a half.

That a man should be sent into penal servitude for bigamy (or even trigamy) seems hard in the face of our abominable marriage laws, and, so far as his legal offence went, I heartily sympathised with him. But what one could have no sympathy with, or even tolerate, was his irrational animosity to a body of public servants whose duty it is to maintain order and discipline in a prison.

He hated the sight of a prison uniform, and could not be induced to speak civilly to any officer of the establishment, except the Governor, chaplain, or doctor, whose civilian dress seemed to operate as a tonic upon his mind.

The old saying that "Love breeds love" may be true. But it is no less true that hatred breeds hatred. Anyhow, the feeling was reciprocated. He worked himself up to a fit of frenzy whenever the blue serge and brass buttons of a "screw" hove in sight, and he was ever ready to pour out the vials of his impotent rage if any officer presumed to speak to him.

Such insensate conduct could only have one result. He was cordially detested by every officer in the prison, and I may add that it would be better that a convict should have a millstone tied around his neck and be cast into the sea, than that he should make himself obnoxious to the warders of any prison in England.

The ex-member of the Corn Exchange

had a very hard time of it, and although much of the treatment he received may have been harsh and arbitrary, there can be no doubt that he brought all his<sup>a</sup> punishments upon himself by his own reckless and impolitic behaviour.

If, like the Irish Member, he had comported himself properly, he might have had as easy a time of it, and, more important still, would have been released nine months sooner than he was. He paid dearly for his imbecility by having to serve the full sentence of three years.

Generally speaking, breed always tells. But I have known many cases in which well bred men appeared to have thrown off the result of their breeding and descended to the level of the footpad. Such a case was that of Dr. Garrad (or Garrard), who, under sentence of five years, forfeited the whole of his remission by his ill-conduct. He worked in the same party as myself for eighteen months, and a bigger blackguard I have seldom met, even in the ranks of the "sub-

merged tenth." I don't think he was addicted to lying ; but he rarely opened his mouth without an oath or a more or less obscene expression coming from it.

This man was once overheard by the Deputy-Governor of Portland prison to invoke God's curse upon the whole establishment, and more particularly upon the Deputy-Governor himself, who, it is true, was a little despotic in his ways.

The Deputy-Governor took no notice of the words he heard at the time ; but next day he had the officer who was in charge of the party summoned to the chief warder's office, and because that official had not reported Garrad for talking he was himself reported and fined half-a-crown !

Although talking is winked at, it is not allowed by the prison rules ; and a prisoner (in the words of the rule) is " liable to punishment if found conversing with another prisoner." Of course that rule is a dead letter, as there is, I suppose, no place on earth

—outside of a “pub”—where more “talking” goes on than in a convict prison.

The once much-lauded “strict silence system” is a myth. Anyhow, the “silent” clause has been proved, over and over again, to be inoperative. As I have had occasion to remark before : “You may punish a man for talking, but you can’t prevent him from doing so unless you cut out his tongue, a ‘preventive measure’ the authorities have not yet had the temerity to introduce.”

There was a man at Parkhurst prison a short time back who gave the authorities a great deal of trouble in this way. He was supposed to be under first sentence, and was placed in the “star” party, a gang intended only for men who had never been in prison before.

But he had been in prison before, although the authorities were ignorant of the fact, and, as he did not take kindly to the star party, he asked the Governor to remove him to another party, a gang of ordinary convicts.



This, of course, the Governor declined to do—it was more indeed than he could do. “ You,” said the Governor, “ are under your first sentence, and you cannot therefore be classified with ordinary prisoners.”

“ But I am not under my first sentence, nor under my second nor third, and I will get removed from the star party.”

“ What ! Have you been convicted before ? There is no entry on your record to that effect, and it would have been there if the police knew of it.”

“ I don’t care a hang what the police know, or what they don’t know. If they are fools, I can’t help it.”

“ Well, you can write a petition, stating the facts, and it will be sent to the Home Office. That is all I can say.”

The petition was accordingly written and sent up to Whitehall, and in due course it was found that the prisoner’s statements were correct. He was at once transferred from the “ star ” gang to an ordinary gang, and there delighted his audience by reciting the



story of his adventures and his recent collision with the authorities. He had gained his point, but a sharp watch was kept upon him ; he became, in fact, a marked man.

After about a month in the laundry he was transferred to 29 party, and had not been two days there before he was reported to the Governor for talking.

He was under a seven years' sentence, and he used this circumstance as an argument in his defence. When asked what he had to say to the charge of talking, he replied—

“ Talking ! Why, of course, I was talking, and I always mean to talk ! Do you think I am going to stick here for seven years without opening my mouth ? What do you think I am made of ? ”

There we have the whole argument in a nutshell. “ What do you think I am made of ? ”

Of the many absurdities with which our prison “ system ” is impregnated this one of trying to prevent a man from “ opening his mouth ” is, I sup-

pose, one of the greatest. It is, from the very constitution of mankind, impracticable.

Another impossible situation is created by the insistence with which the authorities at Whitehall dole out a universal and unvarying ration, or, as they call it, "dietary." Under present arrangements each man receives a similar amount of food.

It does not matter two straws whether the prisoner is a giant or a pigmy. The scale is up there, and he must abide by it.

One need not possess an abnormal degree of intelligence to understand that what might be sufficient to satisfy the cravings of an office boy would be wholly insufficient to meet the requirements of a navvy, hence the war continually waged in all prisons against the stereotyped "bill of fare."

Were it merely a question between prisoners and officials, I should not notice it here, beyond what has already been said. But it extends beyond this point, and, as the following incidents

show, is productive of no end of hardships and trouble among prisoners themselves.

A convict located next door to me could not eat fresh, or newly made bread. It was his custom, therefore, to save his loaves from day to day so that he could have to-day the bread served out to him yesterday.

Now a few cells lower down the landing there was a man who made a practice of supplementing the official allowance by making predatory raids upon any other cell in which he thought anything might be held in reserve.

The consequence was that my unfortunate neighbour often returned from labour at night to find that his cell had been looted. During the time I knew him he must have lost, in this way, at least one hundred loaves of bread ; and surely that was hard lines for a man who never got more than he could eat.

This pilfering of food from the cells of fellow prisoners is common to all prisons, and, as we can easily under-

stand, it causes considerable friction and heart-burnings.

Unfortunately, the evil does not end there, for one morning I heard a sharp tussle going on over my head, and learned later in the day that a fellow on the landing above, suspecting his neighbour of having stolen some food which he had left on his shelf, made a rush for him on the warders opening the cells that morning, and so ill-treated him that he had to be carried to the hospital.

The inquiries instantly made by the chief warder conclusively proved that the wrong man had been attacked, and that the real thief was a man who had never been suspected.

One might go on illustrating by similar incidents the absurdity of the existing arrangements, which, were they viewed in all their bearings, would be found to be one of the most fruitful sources of insubordinations and outrages in every prison in England.

## CHAPTER XI

### CHARLES PEACE, THE NOTORIOUS MURDERER

I HAVE already related the story of my interview with Charley Peace—"murderer and king of burglars"—but for various reasons I abstained from mentioning the fact that "Charley" had a chum at Pentonville who had the power, and was not lacking in the will, to do him a good turn, if he could do so without putting his own neck in the halter.

This chum had, when I first saw him, been for nearly thirty years (on and off) in prison ; so that he knew the

ropes, and could work them when occasion offered.

When Charley was taken in custody of Chief Warder Cosgrove and another officer to Leeds, I was a free man, and as such did not care to renew (except in a few cases) my acquaintance with those whom I had met in duress. But one day I was stopped in the Euston Road by a fellow who asked me to buy an evening paper, saying as he did so, " You would have liked to get a paper some months ago."

I looked at the man rather critically, but could not identify him. He, however, recognised me, and with a significant smile, exclaimed—

" Put your broom out ! "—a phrase only too well known to every ex-convict.

I was still in doubt as to his personality, but, all the same, I found that he had been both in Chatham and Pentonville prisons, and, acting on the precept that old acquaintances should not be forgotten, I invited him to have a glass with me at the opposite "pub."

—the “Orange Tree.”

As we crossed the Euston Road, he took all his papers, rolled them into a bundle, and flung the lot into a garden near Gower Street station.

When we got into the private bar of the “Orange Tree,” he took off one sleeve of his jacket, rolled up his shirt sleeve, and showed me some tattoo marks upon his arm, the most conspicuous being the letters “B. P.”

“Do you know me now?” he said

“No, I can’t say that I do,” I replied.

“Well, you knew Charley Peace, didn’t you? I am his pal.”

“What! Powell!”

“Yes. Ain’t I altered a bit?”

“Altered! All Scotland Yard couldn’t have recognised you.”

“Oh, that’s where you make a bloomer. I was recognised to-day by a split, and I’m going to do a move at once.”

“Why? What have you been up to since your release?”

“Never mind, there’s a big thing on



to-night. Will you have a finger in it ? ”

“ No, dear boy, I shan’t ; and I would advise you not to have a finger in it either. You are far better off selling papers.”

“ D—— the papers. I’ll sell no more, but since you won’t take it on, lend me a bob—I’ll repay you.”

I gladly gave him the “ bob,” and we parted—I to go home, he to go after the “ big thing ” on that night.

Before a week had passed I had forgotten all about this man. But years afterwards, when I was in Wormwood Scrubbs prison, I again met him, and to do him credit he did repay me.

I never passed an easier time at any prison than during the nine months which succeeded our meeting at the “ Scrubbs.”

I regret to say that this man is now in one of H.M. convict prisons for the very offence in the which he desired me to “ have a finger.” He was the staunchest friend Charles Peace had, and during his stay in “ the Ville ”

contrived, by means of "the boys" outside, to keep C. P. well supplied with luxuries of all sorts.

In this connection I may say that no prison is without an exclusive "ring." In some there are many rings, and a kind of unwritten law by which members of each ring enjoy such benefits as the other members can confer. There is a freemasonry amongst professional thieves; and although treachery is often to be found, even amongst the oldest "pals," woe betide the man who has "rounded upon," or even neglected a member of his gang whilst in prison.

Taking Pentonville or Wormwood Scrubbs by way of illustration. There is always some member or members of the various metropolitan gangs "doing time" in those prisons; and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred such men get into the berth of prison cleaner—a position which enables them, not only to know who comes in and who goes out, but, more important still, enables them to make things easy for any of their own chums. The conse-

quence is that every prison is a centre in which the "professional" is certain to find a friend in need, and thus your "Autoleyne" cares little about a "drag" (three months), a sixer (a "carpet" it is generally called), or a "stretch" (twelve months' imprisonment). He knows that he will find some member of his gang there who will make things pleasant for him.

Of course there are risks to be run and difficulties to be encountered, but never mind, it may come to our turn next, and so the ball must be kept rolling.

Your professional thief has a wonderful faculty of invention. I was in the hospital ward at the "Scrubbs" one very severe winter, when I became acquainted with a young man who displayed great ingenuity in befooling doctors and hoodwinking warders.

At first I thought he was very bad indeed, so well did he sham illness. He had the best of everything allowed him ; but it was characteristic of his ailment that, although lively enough

during the day, he was always taken seriously ill at night, and would vomit all that he had eaten, plus a quantity of blood.

For some time his case puzzled the doctors. They could not understand those nocturnal fits of hæmorrhage. But one morning he called me to his bedside, and showing me the night chamber, asked me if I would mind emptying it before the doctors came round the ward.

Not then knowing anything about the fellow's *modus operandi*, and being willing to help him if I could, I emptied the chamber, which certainly contained a lot of red stuff which looked like blood.

On going his round, the doctor asked to see the vessel, and on learning that I had emptied it, he sternly forbade me to do any such thing again. Calling the warder, he gave instructions that the vessel should be submitted to his inspection next day, and that special ward and watch should be maintained over this particular patient.

Strangely enough, the “patient” was not taken suddenly ill that night, and there was, of course, no hæmorrhage.

But now came a new phase of the “patient’s” character. The hospital room was cut off from the ward by a closed iron gate, through which one could see all that was passing outside.

As we paced up and down the room, this man took a bent nail from his pocket, and before I could realise what he had done, he inserted the nail into the lock, gave it a slight twist, and the iron gate was unlocked. Lifting his cap, he bade me “good day,” and was off down the stairs leading to the front before one could say “Jack Robinson !”

It was the smartest piece of lock-picking business I had ever seen, and took me completely by surprise, and, although I did not care much for the man, I could not but admire the bold daring shown. I regret to say that in going swiftly down the stairs his slipper

caught in the rail of the stair carpet ; he was flung to the flag stones beneath, and two days later died from concussion of the brain.

A restless soul with whom I came into contact about this time was poor D——, who is still undergoing seven years' penal for a foolhardy attempt to intimidate the authorities by igniting a ha'porth of gunpowder !

D——, who is still only a young man, and is still moreover a member of a respectable family on the Surrey side of the Thames, glories in the questionable role of "anarchist," in which he has frequently attempted to distinguish himself. Fancying that he was a heaven-appointed deliverer of oppressed mankind, he one night quietly approached the local post office letter-box ; and, dropping in the squib which was to liberate his species from thralldom, stepped across the street and quietly awaited developments.

Presently a report was heard, a tongue of flame was seen to issue from the shop window, a man rushed down

in his nightdress to see what was amiss, and D—— took to his heels, his soul swelling, no doubt, with “ fraternal ” emotion. The damage actually done was very slight, and the affair might have blown over without any further developments, but this was not what D—— expected nor desired. What is the use of all this perturbation of mind, waste of squib, and mankind running about in its nightshirt, if we are to have nothing more than a fizzle ?

No, D—— had done the deed, and he had no intention of allowing the glorious exploit to die out in this fashion, so, arming himself with pens, ink and paper, he betook himself to a public library, where he wrote a confession of his deed of darkness, taking care, however, to suppress his proper name and address, and forwarded the incriminatory missive to the poor postmaster, who was as much taken aback by the “ communication ” as he had been by the crime.

This letter was handed to the police, who, acting upon the evidence of an



expert in the neighbourhood, arrested D—— on suspicion ; and, after proper inquiry, he was brought to book. Now D—— was quite willing to “ face the music ” if only the authorities would be so accommodating as to arraign him as a political offender under the law of high treason. The police, however, did not quite fall in with his views, but clapped him in the dock at the Newington Sessions—how he yearned after the Old Bailey !—where he was sentenced to seven years’ penal servitude under the “ Explosives Act.”

I worked with D—— for some time at Parkhurst, and was frequently treated to such expressions of his “ views ” as the following—

“ Well, D——, old man, how do you feel to-day ? ”

“ Oh, I’m always the same. I only wish I could blow up this hole and all that are in it ! ”

“ Come, come. You are trying to make yourself out to be a very much worse character than you are.”

“ Oh, dear no. Don’t you think

the Governor and all that lot deserve to be blown up ? ”

“ Now, please don’t talk in that way. You know you don’t mean it.”

“ Don’t I, by George ! Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see the place in flames,” etc., etc., etc., etc.

From the foregoing expression of D——’s views it is easy to see what manner of man he was. He was weak in the head, and one of the many serious “ counts ” in the indictment which shall one day be brought against our present methods of treating crime and criminals is that it makes no adequate allowance for the occasional vagaries of a “ mind diseased.”

Another “ imbecile,” but of quite a different species, was “ fat Duffy.” He had been in prison, man and boy, for over thirty years ; and no doubt his brain was affected in consequence. It is simply impossible for an ordinary mind to survive the experiences of thirty years of English prison life. I have known many who have served

that time in prison, but their mental faculties were all more or less affected.

When I was first introduced to Mr. D—— I thought him a very harmless kind of individual, and for the moment associated him in my mind with the notorious Charles Gavin Duffy.

I had not been sitting beside him many minutes before he gave me unmistakable evidence of his powers of speech. What a tirade of abuse he poured out that day on a poor wretch who openly avowed it to be the ultimate end of his ambition to “live and die in the grubber!” (the union).

Duffy sat there on his seat, and, pulling up his shirt, exposed his naked stomach—which, by the way, was of enormous proportions—saying: “Behold, you half-starved wretch. This wasn’t bred in a grubber!”

Duffy had a way of his own with the authorities at Parkhurst at that time, and whatever he insisted upon having—and Duffy’s requirements were very

numerous—he generally succeeded in obtaining, probably for peace and quietness sake. Nothing could convince poor Duffy that the authorities were not leagued together in some foul conspiracy to cheat and defraud him out of some fractional part of his dinner. So Mr. D—— must have a “special ” dinner tin served up to him daily—and he had it. Again, he had a vague notion that his weekly supply of clean linen was neither so clean nor so intact as it should be for a gentleman of his importance, and here again he scored—a special “kit,” duly labelled with his particular monogram, was set aside for him. To see this oleaginous gentleman stand in front of the honoured Governor and hear the phraseology in which he couched his “applications ” to that gentleman, you might entertain a doubt as to which was the Governor and which the prisoner !

When Greek meets Greek a tug of war is said to be imminent, and sure enough never was such a contest seen between two convicts in my time as

that continually waged whenever D—— and a fellow sinner named M—— hove in sight of each other.

M—— was an American citizen, or thought he was, and looked with scorn on all English institutions, especially the one in which he then lived, moved, and had his being. He was, so he said, a victim to our villainous criminal machinery—which may have been true enough—and intended to sue the Treasury on his release for damages, based on a strictly scientific principle. Wherefore, let the Chancellor of the Exchequer leave a large margin in his next budget, so that the country may not find itself in the hands of the official receiver on M——'s release.

I know not whether it was owing to any special enormity on the part of Duffy, or the law of "repulsion," that first provoked hostilities between those two men—so totally different in every respect but one certainly—but the mere sight of each other was considered a sufficient *casus belli* at Parkhurst, where they almost daily fought like

certain historical "wild beasts at Ephesus."

Of course they were "reported," and punished over and over again ; but so long as both are living in the same hemisphere they'll fight ; it is a war *ad exterminationem* in such cases ; and who knows what may not have been the end of it last year, when (I have it on good authority) both were again at it.

Amid the wars and rumours of war ever rising to the surface in a convict prison, it is an agreeable relief to contemplate that touch of nature which is said to "make the whole world kin."

I witnessed a little incident one day which will long live in my memory.

Twenty years ago two brothers named Jack and Harry Martin were thrown on the world unprovided for, through the death of their father. One joined the navy ; the other (who was the elder of the two) obtained a situation in a London hotel ; but since they parted at the door of their broken-

up home, they never once saw or heard from one another.

On the exercise ground at the prison one day I saw two comparatively young men (both of whom had only been a few days at Parkhurst, having been transferred hither from two different stations) suddenly stand still, facing one another like two statues. For three or four minutes they stood thus, each gazing intently at the other. Then, with outstretched arms, they rushed together, and I could see big, glittering tears running down the cheeks of the elder man as they uttered the words, "Jack!" "Harry!" The long separated brothers were once more united!

Few noticed the incident, and of those few I only heard one refer sympathetically to it afterwards. For myself, I was so moved by this pathetic little scene that I could not control my feelings; and, like a woman, I had a good cry.

My readers will, I am sure, be pleased to learn that, although both had



seriously committed themselves, and were sentenced one to seven and the other to five years' penal servitude, their time had then nearly expired, and on their release they were taken in hand by a well-to-do fellow prisoner who was affected by their very touching history, and they are now, I believe, doing well in Australia.

## CHAPTER XII

## PRISON DIET

WORMWOOD SCRUBBS was in my time an ideal prison—I mean an ideal “convict” prison. It has now degenerated, and ranks only as an ordinary “local” gaol ; and the difference between a convict prison and a local gaol is as great as small beer and champagne.

In a local gaol a prisoner is always at work, from early morning till dewy eve ; and he is supposed to be employed at some kind of labour, and although the crank and the treadmill are rapidly disappearing from all

prisons, many still retain those useless instruments of torture.

When I was sent to the “ Scrubbs ” from Millbank I never experienced any difficulty in conforming to the regimen, which was, as nearly as possible, as follows :—

At 6 a.m. all rose to the sound of a bell, and having cleaned up the cell, emptied slops, and indulged in the matutinal ablution, breakfast was served.

For this meal, which consisted of a pint of tea and ten ounces of wholesome brown bread, an hour was allowed. But as one-fourth of an hour was quite sufficient to discuss the meal, one had the other three-fourths of an hour to read, write, or study. And here I may say that—with the exception of Saturday afternoon and Sunday—when one had the whole time to one’s self—I enjoyed the breakfast hour far better than any other part of the day.

At 7 a.m. all members of the Church of England attended Divine service in the fine chapel, which is now the best

specimen of ecclesiastical architecture in any penal settlement in England.

At 7.20 a.m. the service ends, and all hands turn out to labour. The various parties or "gangs" are filed up in rows in the yards, and when the congregation leaves the chapel each man finds his way to his own particular gang.

The "roll" is then called, and when the full complement of men—generally sixteen or eighteen to each party—is found to be present, the warder proceeds to search each man, with the view of seeing that no man takes anything out of the prison which is not allowed by the rules.

In this connection I may relate an amusing story which I heard one day at "the Scrubbs." A very eccentric prisoner named Darcey had a grudge against a fellow prisoner, and on being searched on parade was found to have his dinner knife—a common tin implement—in his jacket pocket. The warder, who was a very decent and patient officer, merely took it out,

and asked the man how it came that he was in possession of it.

Instead of telling the bald truth and admitting that he intended to use it in cutting the throat of his enemy—which I believe was the case—he tried to shuffle out of the difficulty by saying that he used it that morning as a shoe horn, and having put on his boots, slipped it into his pocket, instead of placing it upon his shelf.

This yarn would not go down. The officer reported him for having his knife on parade, and he was sentenced to five days' bread and water.

The man for whose special behoof the knife was undoubtedly intended complained next day to the Governor that his life was endangered, and asked to be removed to another party.

Had the Governor acceded to this request his decision would have given some colour to the charge which this man made, and things would have assumed a serious aspect, but, like any sensible man, the Governor pooh-poohed the idea of homicidal inten-

tions, and left matters as they stood.

The consequence was that when the prisoner Darcey returned to his party everyone looked out for a squall between the two men. But they were disappointed. Darcey, who was an intelligent Irishman, came straight up to his ancient enemy, and holding out the olive branch, assured him that he had no designs upon his life.

From that day the two men became the fastest of friends. But one can easily imagine what might have occurred had the Governor complied with the request made and removed the man to another party. Darcey would immediately have been put down as having a homicidal tendency, and have been boycotted by all.

Such incidents as the foregoing are common enough in all prisons; and one might fill a volume with details of such occurrences.

But I must now return to the daily routine at "the Scrubbs." At 7.30 a.m. each party was marched off in numerical order to the scenes of their daily

operations. The “inside” gangs—tailors, shoemakers, gasfitters, carpenters, and cleaners—would then be allowed thirty minutes’ exercise in the yards, the outdoor parties going straight to their respective quarters.

At 11.20 a.m. the gate bell would ring out, and all work was then suspended, each party returning to the parade ground and filing up as in the morning. Every prisoner was again “searched,” and when this process had been gone through the party broke up, and each man returned to his particular cell, put out his tin plate and cup (if he needed drinking water) and awaited the arrival of his dinner.

By noon every one of the 2000 men then in “the Scrubbs” had his mid-day meal, the only substantial meal of the day, handed to him at his cell door, and was allowed an hour to eat it.

Some curious scenes occurred at “the Scrubbs” now and again over this meal. One would ring his bell, and fancying that he was defrauded of some portion of his rations—a common



enough grievance at "the Scrubbs" in those days—would insist upon having his meat or potatoes (as the case might be) weighed, and for this purpose scales were always placed in the warders' hall, so that if there were any deficiency in weight it could be immediately made up by sending the dinner tin back to the kitchen, where a fresh one would be issued.

But although complaints as to the quantity were always promptly attended to, the quality of the rations was always a fruitful source of trouble. I have over and over again had to complain of the quality of the meat or soup supplied, much of which was unfit for human consumption. But unless the food was absolutely rotten, which was often the case, no notice was taken of such complaints, and if complaints happened frequently, a prisoner was liable to be reported and punished for "giving unnecessary trouble."

In this connection I may refer to a most extraordinary scene which occurred at "the Scrubbs" shortly after

my arrival. It was on a Tuesday, when the dinners consist of one pint of shin of beef soup, twelve ounces of potatoes, half an ounce of cheese, and four ounces of bread, a fair dinner for any ordinary man.

The staple article, however, was not always what it should be ; and, indeed, smelt most horrible at times. On this particular day I received my dinner as usual ; but, on lifting the top can (which contained potatoes only) an abominable odour rose from the bottom tin, which contained the soup. I had, to be sure, often had occasion to turn my nose up at the unsavoury smell which assailed my nostrils when lifting off the top portion of the dinner tin, but on this occasion I was simply disgusted, such was the foul stench which arose from the bottom tin.

Ringling my bell—each cell is supplied with a rather primitive kind of “ electric button,” which, when pressed, causes a metal plate to drop outside the cell and thus attract the attention of the warders—I complained that the

soup supplied was strongly tainted, and unfit to be eaten.

“ Oh, indeed,” said the warder summoned, “ what would you like to have ? Shall I send for a basin of ox-tail soup for you ? ”

“ Excuse me, sir, I don’t ask for ox-tail soup, nor do I ask for any sarcastic observations from you. My complaint is that this soup is unfit for human food, and under section 15 of the regulations I ask that I may be allowed wholesome food.”

“ You should kneel down and thank your stars that you have got any food at all, wholesome or otherwise ! ”

“ Well, I don’t care to discuss matters with you. I simply say that this tin of soup stinks, and I ask you to be kind enough to return it to the kitchen and let me have something I can eat instead.”

“ I can’t let you have anything else to eat. You can see the chief warder if you like and complain to him if you have a grievance. So far as I can see, you have no grievance, and if you ring

your bell again I shall report you for giving unnecessary trouble."

He shut the door with a bang before I could say another word. But, as I thought that the matter should not rest there, and knew that I could not complain on the following day, as the dinner tins would then have been gathered in, I again rang my bell, rather savagely I am afraid, and the door was once more opened by the same officer.

"Now, then, what's the matter?" exclaimed he.

"I ask you, sir, to return this," holding out the dinner tin, "to the kitchen and let me have something fit to eat."

"I'll give you something fit to eat to-morrow when I get you before the Governor," was the reply.

There is an old adage to the effect that "if you talk of the devil he is sure to appear," and if people would only see it, there is perhaps a grain of psychological truth in that saying. He who has ears to hear, let him hear !

Anyhow, this officer had scarcely uttered the words, "before the Governor," when the Governor himself entered the ward, and, in passing my cell, inquired what the difficulty was.

"This prisoner has twice rung his bell within the past ten minutes on a frivolous complaint about his soup, sir," said the warder.

"What do you complain of?" asked the Governor.

"Well, sir, I complain not of the quantity, but of the quality of this soup," handing him the tin.

The Governor took it in his hands, and raising it to his nose, exclaimed, "Phew! Take it back to the kitchen, and tell the cook I wish to see him at my office immediately." Then, turning to me, he said, "You will have another dinner sent down to you," and off he went.

Sure enough, I had "another dinner" sent to me within five minutes, and I must say it was the best dinner I ever had in Wormwood Scrubbs prison.

## CHAPTER XIII

## AN ODD CHARACTER

SINCE the passing of the late Prison Act (1898) many very important alterations have been made in connection with local prisons, but the "convict" department has not been much affected by recent legislation. With the exception of three or four improvements—all of minor importance—the economy of our convict prisons is to-day much as it was when I got my first experience of them.

As a rule, people are less interested in matters which occupied the attention of our forefathers than in contemporary

events. I shall therefore present to my readers a brief and comprehensive epitome of the latest attempt to deal with the subject of crime and criminals.

After a long agitation and a costly "commission," a Bill was passed (August 12th, 1898) to amend the old prison state of affairs. In official phraseology this enactment is known as the "61 & 62 Vict. Chap. 41," and consists of sixteen sections, of which the most important are Nos. 2, 5, 6, 9, and 16.

No. 2 (Section 1) provides that "the Secretary of State may make rules (in this Act called prison rules) for the government of local prisons and convict prisons, and may thereby regulate, among other things," etc., etc., etc.

The great point in this section is not what the kind of rules which the Home Secretary may think well to establish are, but the fact of handing over to a single central authority (already overburdened with other important duties) an autocratic power, wholly incon-



sistent with the idea of an adaptable or workable prison system.

Section 5 deals with the infliction of corporal punishment, and enacts—

(1) “ Prison rules shall not authorise the infliction of corporal punishment :

(a) “ Except in the case of a prisoner under sentence of penal servitude or convicted of felony, or sentenced to hard labour ; or

(b) “ Except for mutiny or incitement to mutiny, or gross personal violence to an officer or servant of the prison ; or

(c) “ Except by order of the Board of Visitors or visiting committees of the prison, after inquiry on oath held by them at a meeting specially summoned for the purpose, and consisting of not less than three persons, two of them being justices of the peace. Provided that the Secretary of State may, if he thinks fit, appoint a metropolitan police magistrate or stipendiary magistrate to take the place of the board or committee, and the magistrate shall, in any such case, have the same

powers as the board or committee.

(2) "An order under this section shall not be carried into effect until it has been confirmed by the Secretary of State, to whom a copy of notes of evidence and a report of the sentence and of the grounds upon which it was passed shall forthwith be furnished."

In the words of a late high official, this rule is "practically worthless," as the Home Secretary—if he even hears about the matter at all—is certain to endorse or confirm the decision of "the board."

Section 6 is an important one, as being a practical attempt—though merely an attempt—to classify prisoners. It is as follows—

(1) "Prisoners convicted of offences, either on indictment or otherwise, and not sentenced to penal servitude or hard labour, shall be divided into three divisions."

(2) "When a person is convicted by any court of an offence and is sentenced to imprisonment without hard labour, the court may, if it think fit, having

regard to the nature of the offence and of the antecedents of the offender, direct that he may be treated as an offender of the first division or as an offender of the second division. If no direction is given by the court, the offender shall, subject to the provisions of this section, be treated as an offender of the third division."

(3) " Any person imprisoned for default in payment of a debt . . . shall, when the imprisonment is to be without hard labour, be placed in a separate division and treated under special prison rules, and shall not be placed in association with criminal prisoners, nor be compelled to wear prison dress, unless his own clothing be unfit for use."

(4) " Any person imprisoned for default of entering into a recognisance or finding sureties for keeping the peace, or for being of good behaviour, shall be treated under the same rules as an offender of the second division, unless he is a convicted prisoner, or unless the court direct that he be treated under

the same rules as an offender of the first division."

Section 9 enables a prisoner under detention for debt to obtain his liberty on payment of a portion of the sum for which he has been committed; and this is certainly an admirable arrangement.

Section 16 shows the limitations of the new Prison Act by stating that "This Act shall not extend to Scotland or Ireland."

So much for the statutory arrangement. We shall now see how the thing operates in the chief metropolitan prison, and to this end I shall here give the account of my own personal experiences and observations at Wormwood Scrubbs prison last year.

When I left the dock at the "County of London Sessions" court at Clerkenwell, and was escorted to the "shades below," I saw the very first indication of the new order of things introduced by the recent Prison Act. A warder came to my cell and handed me a loaf of bread and a piece of cheese, a thing

I have never before received at any court-house.

I asked the warder how long this "evening meal" had been in existence, and he replied, "Oh, it's a new fad, and is not likely to last long."

"An outcome of the Prison Bill?"

"Yes. But a silly arrangement all the same."

I was about to reply to this candid official when the pneumatic tube communicating with the court above sent the warder off to attend to the call.

Presently four men came down from the court, under sentence, and one of those men was the son of an Italian nobleman, named Cagliostro, whose attentions and favour I appear to have attracted whilst awaiting trial at Holloway prison.

I had never seen this scion of foreign nobility before, but I happened to have been sitting on the steps leading to the dock when his case was called on, and from what I then heard, as well as from what he himself told me afterwards, I feel quite justified in describing

him here as a very clever and unscrupulous *Chevalier d'industrie*.

The son of an Italian count, he was granted an allowance by his father, on the strength of which he had made his way to Paris. But he had not been in that city very long before he became involved in some transaction of which I could never make out the beginning, the middle, nor the end ; but in consequence of which he was introduced to the notice of one of the criminal tribunals of that country, and sentenced to three years' penal servitude.

The odd thing about this incident is that, in less than six weeks, this "son of a count" turned up in London, having been "bought out" of quod by "*mon père*."

Although "*mon père*" must have paid a round sum for his promising offspring's liberation, he refused to pay any sum whatever for that young gentleman's board and lodgings, and withdrew the allowance.

Now it is not given to any man (not even to the "son of a count") to live



in London unless he can produce the wherewithal. Wherefore my young sprig of nobility was soon in "Queer Street." He had, however, a wonderful faculty of invention, and to settle the question of ways and means, resolved upon a *grand coup*.

Getting himself up in his best one fine day, he sallied forth, and entering a tip-top jeweller's in the West End, he made a choice selection of ladies' bracelets, chains, and other adornments, and with the air of a *grand seigneur*, ordered them to be sent (on approval) to the Carlton Hotel, where he represented some ladies of his noble family were sojourning.

The poor unsuspecting jeweller (doubtless fancying that he had that day done a grand stroke of business) forwarded the articles to the address given, but no such person as an Italian countess was known to the good people at the hotel, and, worse than all, it was then discovered that the "*grand seigneur*" had contrived to extract some valuable rings, etc., from the



tradesman's cases, and pledged them at some neighbouring pawn shops. A warrant was at once issued against the delinquent, who, after a hard struggle with the fates (in the persons of two limbs o' the law from Scotland Yard) was finally run to earth at the "Alhambra" in Leicester Square.

When invited to "face the music" at the Sessions he put a bold face on the whole matter, and based his defence upon the plea that *il faut vivre*.

Since his father had stopped the supplies, and there was no other visible or invisible means of keeping body and soul together, what could a poor Florentine nobleman do but levy a tax upon the wealth of the coarse and brutal *Anglais*?

This kind of logic appeared to the unsophisticated mind of the Italian to be wholly unanswerable and conclusive. But the learned Chairman of Sessions did not take kindly to it, and sent the "son of a count" (as he would probably have sent the count himself) to take the air at "the Scrubbs" for twelve

calendar months, a domicile from which not all the money in Italy could buy him out.

Another of my fellow voyagers was a very emotional and highly sensitive Frenchman, who distinguished himself by some very extraordinary freaks at the Gallic hospital in Shaftesbury Avenue. He was a medical student, and was admittedly of weak intellect, and locking himself in the library (whence he had previously extracted some books which he had no intention of either reading or selling), he set to work at smashing up the furniture and otherwise damaging the property of that excellent institution.

When charged with his manifold sins and wickedness, he forthwith began to whimper, and as he professed to be innocent of all knowledge of the vernacular, an interpreter was requisitioned. Of all the noises I ever heard in a Court of Justice the dialogues between this dragoman and "the prisoner at the bar," this "took the cake."

The Court met at 10.30 a.m. on that eventful day, and from that moment until 2 p.m. (when this man's case was called up) a white, cambric pocket handkerchief was never for five consecutive minutes away from his eyes. Whether his were crocodile tears or the genuine article I cannot say, but this I know, I never saw so many tears shed by a man in my life.

The fun of the thing was that no sooner had sentence (three months) been passed upon this lachrymose individual than he went below, the handkerchief was thrust into his pocket, and the ready laugh—the sunshine after showers—was the only thing noticeable about him.

I shall only refer to one other man sentenced at this session. He was charged with begging, and for this offence was sent to prison for six calendar months.

Under ordinary circumstances such a punishment seems to be out of all proportion to the offence. But in this case the “offender” happened to be

stone blind, and when I saw that poor, weather-beaten face of his, with the empty eye sockets turned, as it were, appealingly to Heaven, I felt a lump in my throat, and thought of Burns' imperishable lines :—

“ Man's inhumanity to man,  
Makes countless thousands mourn.”

It was nearly 7 p.m. when we arrived at “ the Scrubbs.” The regular daily staff had gone home, and only a few officials were on duty, therefore many of the initiatory rites and ceremonies had to stand over until the following morning.

Each prisoner was, however, bathed, supplied with a supper (a pint of good gruel and eight ounces of brown bread), handed a pair of sheets, a towel and a pillow-slip, and after a brief examination by the doctor, marched off to the cell wherein he was to pass the night, and possibly the whole of his sentence.

Up to this point there was nothing to differentiate between the treatment of prisoners under the new regimen from that which obtained under the old

arrangements. But early on the following morning an improvement upon the former state of things was noticeable.

Having risen at 6 a.m., cleaned up cells, polished tin ware, and got through our ablutions, etc., etc., breakfast (consisting of the everlasting pint of gruel and brown "bun") was served out, and within an hour thereafter the bell rang out for prayers.

Instead of going with the rest of the inmates to chapel, I was taken (with the other "new chums") over to the "reception ward," where the unfinished installation ceremonies were performed.

Here it was that the first change introduced by the new Act became apparent.

All prisoners formerly had their hair cut on their first "reception" in the prison. Now none but those sentenced to terms of penal servitude are shorn of their locks; and although the retention of the hirsute adornments facilitate attempts to escape from prison, as in

the case of the man Alright, whose daring dash for freedom I shall describe later on, there is so much to be said against the old practice of "shearing" a man sentenced to a short term of imprisonment, that the abolition of that ancient custom must be characterised as a decided improvement. I wish I could say the same of the other changes effected by the recent Prison Act.

A rather comical incident occurred during the proceedings in the reception ward on that first morning of my sojourn at "the Scrubbs."

Every prisoner has what is called a "record," or "caption sheet," which is supposed to contain (for official purposes) all necessary information as to the man's antecedents, character, personal peculiarities and family connections.

The warder in charge of the reception wing has to elicit this information from the prisoner himself on his first admission to prison ; and, among the questions put to each man are these :



“ Are you married ? ” “ What is your wife’s name ? ” “ Where does she live ? ”

When it came to the turn of my friend, the “ count’s son,” to reply to those interrogatories, that young gentleman nodded his head to the first item in the list, a movement which the warder, naturally enough, understood (and entered) as being in the affirmative.

To the other queries—“ What’s your wife’s name ? ” and “ Where does she live ? ”—the count’s son evinced a manifest reluctance to reply. The questions were reiterated, but “ the count’s son ” was as one who understandeth not.

At last, finding it necessary to say something, he threw out his hands, after the manner of our Gallic neighbours, and declared that he “ could not speak English that day ! ” “ Je ne puis parler Anglais aujourd’hui.”

“ Well,” retorted the warder (to whom I had to interpret this astounding announcement), “ if you can’t



“speak English to-day, I’ll try and make you speak it to-morrow when I report you to the Governor for disobedience of orders ! ”

Seeing danger ahead, I volunteered my services as interpreter ; and, under cover of inducing my friend to furnish the official with the required information, suggested that, if he desired to conceal the name and whereabouts of his better half, he should enter himself as an unmarried man.

“ Oui, mon ami, oui ; certainement, disez lui que je ne suis pas marie.”

The warder, oblivious to the delicate sinuosities of the Gallic tongue, clutched at the last word (“marie”), and exclaimed—

“ Mary ? Mary what ? and where does she live ? ”

This little episode was laughable enough ; but the *dénouement*, which came sharp and quick, caused the unfortunate man to pull a very long face.

Just as we were leaving the reception ward, and in the act of going across the yard to the “general offices,” we

caught sight of a lady in a heated discussion with the gate porter.

The parties were speaking loud enough, but for the moment I could not hear what they were talking about. As we passed close by the gate, however, I heard the lady exclaim, in indignant tones, "I insist upon seeing my husband!"

The lady was the wife of the count's son.

## CHAPTER XIV

## AN INDECENT PROCEEDING

THE initiatory rites and ceremonies at " the Scrubbs " are now identical with those which obtain at all other prisons. When you know one, you know all.

Having been duly weighed, measured and " invested " with a circular badge bearing a number (B. 2. 17), and which is the only distinctive mark and peculiarity by which one prisoner is known from another, we were marched back to our respective cells ; and when I reached mine I found the tin dinner vessel containing the mid-day meal lying on the cell table

This meal,—which is the only substantial meal given to a convict—consisted of a pint of fairly good pea soup and eight ounces of very bad potatoes, and I conscientiously assert that I have never seen such a vile collection of potatoes in my life as those served daily to prisoners.

An hour was allowed to eat this dish, and by 3 p.m. the officers, having returned from their dinners, the “ hall ” bell rang out for exercise ; and those wards which had not taken the air earlier in the day were trotted out (in single file) for an hour’s tramp around the asphalted rings in the yards.

Each prisoner is supposed to keep at a distance of three paces from the man in front of him ; and strict silence is ordered to be maintained throughout the circle.

But it is one thing to issue an order, and quite another to ensure complete obedience to it ; and I must say that if all the other orders issued by the prison authorities were to be treated with similar indifference to that shown

to the "ukase" enjoining strict silence, the whole prison service would simply resolve itself into a centre of rebellion.

I chanced to be the last but one of the eighty-four men led out to exercise on that day ; and before I had got a hundred yards along the ring track I was "put to the question" by no less than six different prisoners.

The "question" varied a little to be sure, but the sum total was this :—

"How long a' ye got?" "What are ye in for?" "W'ere d'ye come from?"

One shock-headed individual, who had evidently lost the bump of locality, ventured on a wider path ; and insisted upon knowing "'ow the war's gettin' on?"

He was clearly a bit of a politician, as he commenced to arraign Mr. Chamberlain for certain high crimes and misdemeanours, committed in the right hon. gentleman's infancy. The greater sinner, however (according to this sage's credo), was Mr. Jesse Collings, whom he denounced with fury

as the origin of the three acres and a cow swindle.

Finding that I was not conversationally inclined, he broke out into fierce anathemas against all "genelman lags" who "put on airs" and otherwise misbehave themselves by conforming to the prison rules and regulations.

He was in the middle of a lengthy harangue upon the iniquity of paying any attention to Governors, chaplains, warders, or other fiends in authority, when he was called to order by one of the four janitors who, stationed (on elevated positions) around the outer ring, are supposed to enforce the "strict silence" edict.

"Now then," cried one, "you have been talking all the afternoon, 43, and I shall report you to-morrow if I see any more of it."

"Me?" ejaculated this doughty rebel against constituted authority, "me? Blowed if I ever opened me maath," and with this ready lie and a smirking grin playing about his



“ maath,” he went his way, probably rejoicing at his imaginary superiority to the “ limbs o’ the law.”

Alas, his exultation was but short-lived. On the following morning he was reported and punished for talking while at exercise ; and, from what I afterwards heard, he “ climbed down ” when brought face to face with the Governor, and instead of being defiant, made an abject apology for having violated the regulations.

One may dismiss such a creature as this from one’s view of the situation, but what we cannot so easily get rid of is the fact that the “ silent system ” is a dead failure. You can punish men for talking if you like, but you can’t *prevent* them from talking ; and whether or no the game is worth the candle is a question which I must now leave to others to decide.

We had not been on the exercise ground more than twenty minutes before a scene which can only be described by the word “ shameful ” occurred.



The sanitary arrangements at Wormwood Scrubbs, like those at most prisons, leave much to be desired. A line of horse-troughs, divided by a very slight partition (not at all calculated to insure strict privacy to those occupying the divisions) constitutes the closets; and whenever Dick, Tom and Harry have any prohibited articles—such as a “stiff” (a letter), tobacco, or a “reader” (a newspaper)—to pass on to other members of the fraternity, the custom is to fall out of the exercise ring (under cover of using the closets) and hand over the contraband goods to the recipient, or his “agent,” by thrusting them through the aperture, which a sapient architect seems to have provided for this special purpose, under the seat of each division.

That such facilities for carrying on illicit communication should exist is bad enough; but the scene which I witnessed on that first day at “the Scrubbs” was simply disgraceful.

As the details are unfit for publication, I shall only say that had the

incident occurred outside the prison walls, the principal actors in it would very properly have been charged with indecent exposure.

## CHAPTER XV

### MORE ABOUT THE SEARCH, A CAPTAIN OF THE ROYAL ENGINEERS, THE BLACKMAILER

ABOUT this time I revolted—successfully in the end—against the method in which our warders made us strip to the bare skin when searching us, and I afterwards heard that two other men had also protested against this indecent search, and both “kicked up a shindy.”

The youngest of these “protestants” (No. 4) was, I fear, a little chicken-hearted, and gave up the struggle when he found that it resulted

in " No. 1 punishment diet." But the other man (No. 115) had more grit, and took the matter seriously.

On returning from the Governor's office under punishment, he smashed up every article of furniture in his cell, including the glass windows.

Of course he was again punished for this offence, as well as for the original sin of refusing to strip naked. But, although one could not help thinking that he was perfectly justified in protesting against this outrage, I had no sympathy whatever with his methods.

No institution in the world can tolerate open rebellion against its authority ; and anything in the nature of a revolt must, of necessity, be suppressed with the heavy hand in a prison.

Therefore, when No. 4 and 115 heard of my " constitutional opposition " to the search, and found that I was thenceforth exempted from it, both were anxious to have a chat with me upon the matter, and sent sundry messages (through the ward cleaners)

desiring me to name any Wednesday when we might exercise together and thus be able to "exchange views," etc.

This brings me to one of the, if not the most important, changes in the regimen of local gaols effected by the recent Prison Act.

Prior to that measure coming into force, every prisoner (whatever his sentence might be) exercised by himself, walking round an asphalted ring at three paces distance from the man in front of him, and "strict silence" was supposed to be observed. But this "Act" provides that "when a prisoner undergoing a sentence of more than six months shall have completed six months of said sentence, he shall (providing his conduct and industry be satisfactory) be eligible to exercise, in association, for one hour on a certain day of each week."

In accordance with a section of the Act, each Wednesday forenoon (10.30-11.30) is set apart at Wormwood Scrubbs prison for men exercising "in associa-

tion." They walk around the ring, as usual, for one hour, the only difference being that, instead of going in single file, as on other days, each man picks up his companion for the time being as he leaves the ward or hall and enters the exercise grounds.

Whether this new arrangement is a good thing or not is beside the point, as my present business is not to express opinions, but to state facts ; and the first which presents itself at this point is that, on a certain Wednesday in March, No. 4 (who had previously arranged to walk with me on that day) and myself fell into the line of march around the ring, and, after a few general observations on other matters, went at once into the question of the new search process.

" Never heard of such a beastly thing," said No. 4. " They came into my cell and made me take off every thing, and then kept me standing in the cold while they searched all my clothes. Of course they could find nothing out of the way ; for you know, if I had any



‘stuff’ it is not likely that I could stow it away in my flannel vest or drawers; besides, I have plenty o places to hide it barring my shirt.

“I wasn’t going to have that sort of thing done to me again, and when they came next time I simply refused to take off my clothes at all. Old B—— reported me, and I got two days’ bread and water, was stopped all letters and visits, and have to do six more days in prison. Don’t you think it’s a bloomin’ shame?”

Well, seeing that I had kicked against the thing myself, I could not be suspected of having taken to it very kindly; but I reminded my friend that we were very much at the disposal of the prison authorities, and that they could do just what they pleased with us.

“I’m d——d if they’re going to do what they please with me. Let them try it on again, and I’ll lead them a nice dance. But it’s a funny thing that you managed to get out of it. How did you do it?”



Having explained my mode of procedure, and reminded him of the beneficial results, I advised moderation in his future dealings with the officials, most of whom were, I knew, as much disinclined to carry out in its entirety this disagreeable duty as others were to submit to it.

I hope my representations carried some weight, and that No. 4 did not again run amuck against irresponsible warders. But I am not quite sure that such was the case, since, although he was discharged three weeks later, he did not afterwards suffer any further punishment ; and yet I have reason to believe that the search—in all its objectionable details—was carried out in his case for the remainder of his time.

But, however tractable No. 4 may have become after our talk, I know that No. 115 proved a hard nut to crack, and that the insistence of the authorities in his case not only increased his term of imprisonment, but led to the destruction of prison property

to the tune of some £15 or £20, an amount which must, in some way, be included in the prison estimates.

I had an hour's chat with this breaker-up of prison furniture on the following Wednesday—according to arrangement — and from “notes” made immediately afterwards I am enabled to relate here what actually passed between us on that occasion.

No. 115 was what is known as “an old lag” (one who has undergone one or more terms of penal servitude), and, therefore, likely enough to put up his back at what he might choose to consider as “tyranny” on the part of any mere “local” warders. When he came up to me on that Wednesday morning he furnished me with the key to his “distinctive mark and peculiarity” in the very first sentence which he uttered:—

“A d—— nice treat this, ain't it? I've been in the bloomin' prison for more than a dozen year, an' av' never been stripped naked afore.”

On asking him to tell me “what

actually occurred," he broke out as follows :—

" Curs ! They wanted me to take off all me clothing and stand naked till they flung 'em back at me, one by one, as ye'd fling a bone at a dog. No d—— fears. I wasn't goin' to stand that sort of think, so old B—— (the dirty tyke !) says, ' I report you to-morrow morn for disobedience of orders.' But I'm d—— if he got me flannel or drawers off for all 'is reportin'. Anyway, he did report me next day, and the Governor give me two days' bread and water, and Gawd knows what else besides—for ye see I don't care for nothink but the bread an' water, seein' as 'ow I've got nobody as is likely to wisit or write to me. But when I got back to me cell and see that bloomin' little bun (four ounce loaf) a-lying on me table, I jist swallowed 'em as if he were a pill, an' then I went for 'em."

" Went for who ? "

" Why, for the bloomin' toggery, o' course."

As this desperado became reminiscent about his exploit, one could see the blood mounting to his forehead, his hands were clenched, his eyes double their natural size, and his breathing became more rapid. Clearly enough he sniffed the battle with the unfortunate woodwork afar off, and seemed to enjoy the delirium of his madness again in the telling of it.

“ Fust was the Bible, hymn book, an’ all that lot ! Wot’s the use in givin’ of us Bibles an’ a-preaching morality to us w’en they go and strip us bald naked an’ make beasts on us ? Well, as I didn’t want to make a noise afore I done some damage I next tucked the bed an’ beddin’ ; and w’en I got ’em all in rags on the floor I went for the ’ard stuff. Getting ’old o’ the stool, I wacked into the table, but ’ad the misfortune to break the stool in a-trying to break the table ; them——tables take some smashin’.

“ O’ course they ’eard the row ; but as it was dinner time, and all the bloomin’ ‘ screws ’ were away, I ’ad it

all to myself for well nigh 'arf an 'our. O' course you can do a lot in 'arf an 'our if ye set your mind on it, an' w'en the bloomin' sneak (the meal hour patrol) came an' looked in the spy-hole, he bellowed out, ' 'Ullo, 115, wot 're you up to ? '

" Everythink was all abaat broken up then save the window ; but I makes no more ado, but takes off my shoes, and sendin' one flyin' at the spy-hole, I sent the other through all the glass I could reach. Didn't ye 'ear it ? "

Of course I had heard it, but was not aware till next day where the noise came from ; and when 115 had finished his story I tried to impress upon him the necessity of conforming to the rules and regulations, as, apart from other considerations, prison officials are not to be beaten, and however genuine a prisoner's grievance might be, redress was not to be gained by violent methods.

I might as well have spoken to the winds. He would fight the matter out in his own way ; and whether (as the

results abundantly show) he was in his right mind or not, he gained his point, and was not again required to go through the objectionable process.

Owing to the constant annoyances caused by the importunities of the rougher and refractory class of fellow prisoners on the one hand, and the difficulty experienced in tramping round the asphalted rings—when the weather is wet those rings are little better than skating rinks—I begged the medical officer to allow me to take my exercise on a gravelled path running along the side of the grounds, and where only a few prisoners were allowed to take the air.

The privilege was granted ; and, besides other advantages connected with it, it afforded me an opportunity of cultivating the acquaintance of the most remarkable prisoner then under sentence in the prison.

This extraordinary individual was—or gave himself out to be—an ex-captain of the Royal Engineers, named



I——. He was undergoing twelve months' imprisonment for defrauding a hotel keeper.

A tall, straight, portly man of about sixteen stone, I—— was on the wrong side of fifty, and appeared to have had a very chequered career. He was moreover an undischarged bankrupt, and devoted the whole of his sentence to the task of formulating a scheme by which he was to retrieve his fortunes on the turf within six months of his release !

My first interview with I—— was when walking along the side path just mentioned, and the very first of a series of important announcements with which he favoured me later on was made on that occasion.

After a few preliminary remarks, in which he endeavoured to impress me with a due sense of his *status* as a "gentleman," he came out with this astounding statement:—

"I owe £10,000. How much do you owe ?"

When I assured him that my debts



did not exceed the modest sum of £20, I fell in his estimation at once.

“ Hang it, man, a fellow is nowhere—not even in the running—unless he owes everybody money. Now, look here, I can see you are a superior kind of fellow, and I would like to give you a lift up. How much can you earn a week ? ”

“ Well, my income varies considerably—never exceeds £3, and is more often than not very much under that amount.”

“ I want a fellow to assist in my new system. It is all sound business, and, if you follow my instructions, I will guarantee you £10 a week and all expenses.”

Here was a windfall if you like !—the “ El Dorado ” for which I had been searching all my life. I began to feel myself grow in importance already, and thanked my stars that I had been sent to “ the Scrubbs ” for “ twelve months’ hard.”

The exercise hour was now nearly up, and, as we filed in from the grounds

to our cells, the ex-captain whispered :—

“ Are you a betting man ? ”

“ No.”

“ Do you know anything about the turf ? ”

“ Not the least.”

“ So much the better. You’re the very man I am looking for. Just turn over in your mind the names of any bookmakers you may have seen or heard of, and let me have them to-morrow.”

That “ to-morrow ” was destined to open up a new phase of prison life to me, and before I had an opportunity of again seeing the ex-captain I was transferred to another “ party,” and there met the most accomplished scoundrel I have ever known in my life.

Here is the story of this criminal celebrity as it appears in my original “ notes,” and has been once before published.

I had not been in the 22 party very long before I made the acquaintance of a man named Charles Legrand ; or,

as he would insist upon having it, Charles Percy Grandell.

The son of a distinguished and much respected Dane, Grandell spent his early days at the best school in Copenhagen, where he acquired such a reputation for scholarship (particularly in philology) that, at the comparatively raw age of nineteen, he was appointed to a vacancy which then occurred at the Legation ; and this post gave him the *entrée* to the chief diplomatic families, the most exclusive of all sections of "society."

But the boy is father to the man, and the same "idiosyncracies" (to use no harsher term) which subsequently pitchforked him into that full blaze of notoriety that illuminates the dock of "No. 1" court at the Old Bailey involved Grandell in some imbroglio with the authorities at the Embassy, and he was obliged to "resign"—after but a few years of diplomatic "experiences."

Like a once distinguished member of our own military service—the late

“ Baker Pasha ”—Grandell enlisted under the Ottoman flag during the memorable Russo-Turkish war, and nearly brought a chequered career to a premature close by being shot as a spy.

There is no doubt in the world but that he richly deserved such a fate, as, from facts known to me, he was taken almost red-handed.

But what he calls his “ genius ” got him out of this scrape in a remarkable way. Shortly after the fall of Plevna he was arrested, bound, and hurried off by night to the military head-quarters ; but, owing no doubt to the general confusion succeeding the fall of the great stronghold, he contrived by a strategic move to elude the vigilance of his captors, break through his bonds, and, getting on board an English vessel—which, by the way, was nearly wrecked on the voyage—found his way to London.

A total stranger in the great metropolis, Grandell played his cards so well that within a week he was “ set up.” But I doubt whether many

in his position would have incurred the risks attending the course he took. Adopting a French name and a French style, he worked his way to—of all places in the world—the Swedish Embassy, and so imposed upon the ignorance of the officials there that he obtained a formal introduction to a well known, noble family in this country, who were anxious to procure the services of a competent French tutor for their children.

Grandell might have done well here, but for what he considers a “ fatality,” which he still avers has followed him from his youth upwards.

A “ Bohemian ” by nature, as well as by early training, he could not settle down to the routine of any quiet and studious occupation ; and after a six months’ sojourn at Welmor Hall, he threw up the French grammar and the English pupils, and went in for a line of business which was more congenial to his tastes, but less likely to bring him health, peace, or happiness.

Through his connections with the

family of Lord Glossop he had acquired a fairly intimate acquaintance with not only the *personnel* of a large section of the English nobility, but with the private affairs of these families—a knowledge which he afterwards utilised to the scandal of a noble name and his own ruin.

In association with another adventurer, with whom he became acquainted through the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*, he now opened what he called “ a private inquiry agency ” in the neighbourhood of Oxford Street, advertised his business extensively, and found his enterprising spirit soon rewarded by a rich crop of dupes, who, in pursuit of a fad or the gratification of personal malice, gave him ample occupation and remuneration for some two years or so.

Just then the historical “ Parnell Commission ” was appointed ; and amongst those who patronised the new detective agency in Oxford Street was a gentleman who, purporting to come from Sir George Lewis, of Ely Place—



who, as everyone knows, figured conspicuously in that *cause célèbre*—sought the assistance of our friend Grandell, and gave him *carte blanche* in a projected visit to Ireland for the purpose of fishing up some needful facts and figures.

Grandell left Euston station on the same evening that he received this commission, and reached Holyhead in due course, but here a strange thing occurred.

In the first class compartment in which he travelled from Euston there were only two other passengers, an elderly gentleman, who was going on a visit to Chester, and a middle-aged lady, then bound for Dublin.

On leaving the railway carriage the lady appeared rather faint, and Grandell, who always wore the air of a thorough gentleman, at once volunteered his services, and begged to be allowed to look after the lady's luggage, etc., no small undertaking when a "lady of quality" goes a-globe-trotting.



By sheer dint of persistent affability and attention during the run across the channel, he so gained ground with this lady that she not only revealed her identity, but requested Grandell—who represented himself as being a medical man in large practice in London—to find her accommodation at the Royal Hotel at Kingstown, as she was quite unable to continue the journey to Dublin—a distance of only some seven or eight miles.

Grandell may not, at this time, have meditated mischief, but how true it is that :—

“ The sight of means to do ill deeds  
Make ill deeds done.”

On the lady first taking up her quarters at the hotel she was, of course, waited upon by the female attendants of the establishment ; but Grandell was allowed free access to her, and acted, indeed, as her medical and clerical *factotum* for the time being. In this latter capacity he undertook to forward two wires informing the lady's friends of her indisposition and

whereabouts. Neither of those wires was sent.

The consequence was that Grandell (who, instead of going on his way to Dublin, took up his quarters at the same hotel, and was assiduous in his attentions upon Lady B——, the lady in question) became hourly more intimately acquainted with and important to her.

Two days passed in this uneventful way ; but on the third day the crisis came. As she had not received any reply to either of her telegrams, she, naturally enough, became suspicious, and caused a special message to be despatched by the hotel people. In less than an hour a reply arrived—her sister and niece were coming on to see her.

On hearing this Grandell suddenly disappeared from Kingstown. It was afterwards proved that he had then gone on to Dublin ; but whether the negotiations which he was employed to carry out failed, or were ever instituted, I cannot say.

All that is clear in connection with his subsequent movements is that, on returning to London, an angry altercation took place between him and the gentleman supposed to have been sent to him by Sir George Lewis ; and that quarrel may have had something to do with the subsequent appearance of " Sir George " at the Old Bailey, when Grandell was put upon his trial for blackmailing Lady B——.

The facts of that case were simple enough ; and, excepting the question of handwriting (upon which some of the ablest " experts " were called into council) there was nothing really complicated or abstruse in the issues put before the jury in that celebrated trial.

Within six months of the date of the Kingstown incident Grandell found himself in low water financially. Some rather fishy transactions in connection with his new character of " private detective " led him into difficulties ; and it is almost certain that, were it not for the amazing disclosures made

by Lady B—— to Scotland Yard, Grandell would have soon found himself in the clutches of the law.

As things turned out, it was clear that, although there were many and great obstacles in the way, he had resolved upon making a *grand coup*.

He at first attempted to replenish his exhausted exchequer by waylaying a messenger boy and inducing him to go to the Westminster branch of the "London and County Bank" with a note, purporting to come from a Major Stewart, of Onslow Gardens, who had an account at that establishment.

But the bank officials were rather suspicious—as they might well be—and said they would send on the fresh cheque book which was applied for in the note ; so the gallant "Major" may congratulate himself on having thus escaped from what would otherwise have proved to be a considerable loss of £ s. d.

Foiled in this attempt to raise the wind, Grandell fell back upon the long meditated *coup*. Going down to

Kelley's Library in Shaftesbury Avenue, he indited a long epistle to his intended victim, Lady B——, and, having recapitulated all the circumstances attending their journey from Holyhead to Kingstown (with, of course, extensive embellishments), he bluntly informed this respectable lady that unless she sent him £50 forthwith he would disclose certain incidents connected with that journey which would ruin her reputation for ever.

How any sane man could have given himself away in this way has ever been a problem to me. But such phenomena do appear now and again ; and the plea of insanity, which is often submitted in such cases, may furnish the key to many such transactions.

But if Grandell was mad—a proposition to which I can by “ no manner of means ” subscribe—there was undoubtedly a method in his madness. He did not give his own private address in this threatening letter, but addressed his mandate from Kelley's Library ; and I have his own assurance that he

fully expected that this cowardly ultimatum would be satisfactorily replied to within the forty-eight hours' limit prescribed by him !

Lady B—— was wise in her generation, however, and did the proper thing at once. She handed this brutal missive over to her solicitor, who advised her to send a reply to the address given and await developments.

The plot developed speedily. Before twenty-four of the forty-eight hours had passed, a letter, with the armorial crest of the lady's family was sent to the address given ; a boy in hotel livery called and received it from the clerk—who, of course, knew nothing about the intrigue surrounding this epistle—and a detective, especially told off for this " job," followed him from Shaftesbury Avenue to the Euston Road, and saw him deliver the letter to " a gentleman in black," who was standing outside the " saloon bar " of the " Duke of Grafton " public-house.

The " gentleman in black " was immediately pounced upon by a gentle-



man in blue ; and next morning Charles Grandell stood in the dock of Marylebone police court, charged with black-mailing Lady B——.

Owing to some technical objection, raised by Mr. Arthur Newton, who appeared for the prisoner, the *venue* was changed from Marylebone to Bow Street ; and, after several remands—during which Grandell lived, moved, and had his being in the insalubrious “ castle ” at Holloway—he was committed for trial at the next Old Bailey Sessions.

Being a very serious case, it was put upon the “ judge’s list,” and, as Mr Justice Hawkins was on the “ rota ” for this sessions, Grandell found himself face to face with the most severe criminal judge then in England. The charge, as I have said, was a very serious one ; but Grandell was a man of great resource, and might have succeeded in establishing his plea of “ not guilty ” had it not been for the presence of Sir George Lewis, who was retained by Lady B—— to prosecute.



As soon as "Sir George" appeared in court Grandell felt that he was a doomed man; and notwithstanding the efforts made by Mr. Gill, who conducted the defence with consummate ability, Grandell was, after a three days' hearing, found "guilty."

It was very late—past 9 p.m.—when the jury brought in their verdict; and as Grandell denied the imputation (made by a prison warder) of having been previously convicted, sentence was deferred until the following morning.

I was in "No. 1" court on that memorable morning when Mr. Justice Hawkins took his seat on the bench; and except once (at the Manchester Assizes), when I saw Mr. Justice Day in very high dudgeon indeed with "the prisoner at the bar," I don't remember having ever seen or heard of such an outburst of indignation as was witnessed in that Old Bailey court on that day.

When asked by the clerk of the court what he had to say "why sen-

tence should not be pronounced," Grandell made a stirring speech—a speech which was afterwards very favourably reviewed and commented upon by no less a critic than Mr. George Buchanan.

But Mr. Justice Hawkins had a way of his own ; and after passing as severe a criticism as I have ever heard (from the judicial bench) upon the antecedents of the prisoner, sentenced him to twenty years' penal servitude.

On hearing this dreadful sentence the prisoner fell flat on his face in the dock ; a female voice was heard to shriek out from the centre of the court, and five minutes later Lady B—— was carried from the stuffy chamber to an ante-room in an unconscious condition.

## CHAPTER XVI

## THE HYSON GREEN MURDER

THE late Mr. George Buchanan took up the case of Grandell, and commented very strongly upon the severity of the sentence passed by Mr. Justice Hawkins, and, as I know that his lordship came in for some very severe criticisms in connection with another case, which occurred about the same time, I here reproduce my account of what was publicly known throughout the Midlands as "The Hyson Green Murder," in the hope of correcting what I have, ever since, considered to be an erroneous impression as to the

present Lord Brampton's "prejudices." The story is told here, as originally written, many years ago.

In one of the northern environs of Nottingham is a region which, lying between two omnibus thoroughfares, is yet as secluded as though it were twenty miles distant from the great centre of the lace trade.

Besides the fields which abound in the district, and where one can always hear a loud chorus of those "blithe spirits" which, with the family nest beneath them, yet seem to live chiefly in the air, there are a number of quiet, green lanes along which local lovers delight to saunter on a Sunday evening.

It was on such an evening in the spring of '94 that a tall, thin, fair young lady of about twenty-two summers might have been seen standing beneath an old oak tree (known as the "Gordon Bough" throughout Nottingham). By her side was a heavy Gladstone bag, and on her left arm she carried a light mackintosh, upon the collar band of which the initials "E. C."

were distinctly visible to the passer-by.

She was evidently waiting for someone, and now and again she would consult a small, gold lever watch, which, attached to a massive albert chain, she carried in a small reticule which was slung by a strap over her right shoulder.

She wore the garb of a hospital nurse, and her general appearance indicated a quiet, placid temperament, such as we are accustomed to see in ladies of a much superior rank than the generality of hospital nurses belong to.

Once or twice she picked up her heavy Gladstone bag as if intending to go forward, but each time she put it down again and muttered to herself:—

“No, I must wait. He is sure to come, and if I go on I might miss him. But I do so wish he would come. I will wait a little longer.”

Suddenly the loud barking of a dog was heard in the distance, and, looking in the direction from whence the sound came, she caught sight of a fine retriever bounding across the fields

immediately behind the tree under which she was standing.

In another instant he was by her side, and, following closely after, a fine athletic young fellow cleared the fence which divided the field from the narrow lane in which the "Gordon Bough" stood, and raising his hat, apologised for being late.

"I am so glad you have come, Walter. I feel so tired, and this bag is so heavy. Why didn't you let me go on to your mother's straight from the station instead of asking me to meet you here?"

"Emmy, darling, do forgive me. I know your journey from Liverpool must have tired you out, but never mind, I'll take your bag, and we'll soon get home. I asked you to meet me here because I have something to say which could not be said at home."

"It is of no use, Walter, talking to me about the old subject. You know what I told you in my last letter. It would never do; and besides, Dr. F---- has proposed to me and I have

accepted him. I wrote to your mother all about it, and I had hoped she would have explained matters to you. Now be a good boy ; pick up that bag, and let us get to Fern Cottage as soon as possible, for I am nearly done up."

Delivered in a clear, decisive tone, those words sank deep in the heart of Walter Smyth. He had loved Miss Cross for a long time in his own quiet way ; and, although she had more than once told him that they could never be anything more than friends to each other, he had long gone on nursing a futile passion.

Now it was all over. She was engaged to another, and he knew her too well to attempt anything like persuasion.

No, he would bide his time. He might not succeed in winning her affections ; but, as he lifted up that Gladstone bag and escorted his mother's guest to the family homestead, he silently registered a vow before High Heaven that no one else should have her.



The accomplishment of this vow forms one of the most sensational episodes in the history of Nottingham.

As they wended their way along that lovers' promenade Walter Smyth often gazed at the young woman by his side with wistful eyes. He longed to unbosom himself, to tell her of the many troubled days and sleepless nights which he had endured for her sake. But her peremptory manner closed his lips, and, forgetting his character of host, he made no attempt to make himself agreeable.

Now and again Miss Cross tried to rouse him from the stupor which had settled down upon him and lead him into some friendly conversation. But all her efforts were in vain. A dogged silence, which those who knew Walter Smyth would describe as ominous, marked his demeanour throughout the long walk from the "Gordon Bough" to his mother's house, which was situated on the outskirts of Hyson Green.

From the bay window of the front

parlour an elderly lady in deep mourning was looking across the fields and wondering what occasioned the delay in her guest's arrival.

She knew all about her son's attachment to her guest, she knew also his passionate nature, and it was because of this knowledge that she withheld from Walter the information she had received from Miss Cross as to her approaching marriage with Dr. F——.

When, therefore, she saw the young couple approach the house, and noticed the gloomy, dejected aspect of her son's features, dark forebodings arose in her mind, and for the first time during their long acquaintance Mrs. Smyth regretted this flying visit of Miss Cross.

The aged lady was, however, of a genial disposition, and too much mistress of herself to betray any outward signs of that uneasiness which agitated her mind, and of which she could not divest herself.

Long before the ill-fated couple reached the house Mrs. Smyth stood

on the doorstep prepared to receive her young friend with open arms.

Arrived at the house, Walter hastily brushed past his mother, deposited the Gladstone bag on the hall table, and whilst the two ladies were exchanging greetings passed out again without attracting the attention of either.

Going straight to his workshop, which was situated almost at the rear of the dwelling-house, Walter brought out his bike, and was soon speeding on his way to the town of Nottingham.

It was, as I said, Sunday evening, and all business houses, with the exception of hotels and other places of refreshment were of course closed.

Pulling up at the "Black Boy" Hotel, Walter left his machine in charge of an attendant, ordered a glass of brandy—a most unusual thing for him to do—and, having hastily gulped it, rushed out of the inn, across the market place, and was soon hammering at the door of a gunsmith in Church Passage.

The top of a bald head protruded

from the second floor front, and a husky voice cried out, "Hulloa! what's the matter?"

"All right, Ted, it is I. Come down and let me in; I want to have a chat with you."

"Half a mo', Wat"; and the bald head disappeared, but in less than a minute the door was opened, Walter was invited into the back parlour, and the two friends were soon in earnest consultation.

"It is no use," said Walter, after a long parley. "I can see my way to improve upon the old style of revolver, and, if my calculations are sound, I may make your fortune as well as my own."

"Well, you're a good mechanic, Wat, I know, but if you'll take my advice you'll stick to cycles, and leave pistols severely alone."

"You can't turn me from my purpose, and if you won't let me have that six-chambered one I was talking about I'll go up to Dawson now and get one from him."

“ You can have anything in my shop, Wat ; but I don’t think any good will come of your experiments. However, I’ll fetch you the best revolver I have, and anything else you like.”

“ Well, bring in one of those large boxes of cartridges you were showing me the other day. I think I can make use of some of them within the next twenty-four hours.”

Ten minutes later Walter Smyth might have been seen rushing along Beast Market Hill on his way to Hyson Green, but instead of going straight home, where his mother, young sister, and Miss Cross were anxiously awaiting his return, he made a detour to avoid passing the house, and five minutes later the report of firearms was heard by the little family group, who were enjoying a cup of tea and a chat in the back parlour of Mrs. Smyth’s house.

“ He is in the workshop,” exclaimed the old lady. “ Etty, run round and tell Watty we are waiting for him.”

When the young girl left the room Mrs. Smyth rose from her seat, and, taking Miss Cross's hands in hers, she fairly broke down.

"I don't know what is coming over the boy," she muttered between her sobs. "I dare not tell him of your engagement. I know that he feels very deeply about you, and I was afraid that he might do something desperate. I wish, I wish——" Here the old lady again gave way, and it was as much as the practised nurse could do to restore her temporarily shaken equanimity.

"Don't worry yourself, dear friend, about Walter and I. He knows all now. I spoke very plainly to him coming along, and I think he understands that we can never be anything more than we have been to each other."

"The boy's heart is wrapped up in you, Emily; and, if it were possible, I would wish things otherwise. But——"

Etty here rushed into the room, and



Mrs. Smyth's sentence was abruptly cut short.

"Mother," cried the young girl, "what do you think Watty is doing?"

"How do I know, child; has he got anyone up there?"

"No, he is all by himself; but he keeps loading and unloading a pistol, and when I got into the workshop he told me to stand still, and he fired right at my head. There was nothing in the pistol; but I was so frightened that I ran out of the shop. Watty followed me, and took me up in his arms and kissed me. He said that he was trying some new invention, and wished that Miss Cross would come round and see the improvement he was going to make."

"Oh, Wat is always trying some new invention," said Miss Cross. "I shall just run round and see what he is up to now."

"Don't go, dear," said Mrs. Smyth, pleadingly. "When he is tired out he will come home. Leave him to himself."



“ Oh, nonsense ! ” replied Miss Cross. “ His proper place is here ; and I shall go and fetch him here in less than ten minutes.”

Taking her hat from the rack in the hall, and without paying any attention to the entreaties of Mrs. Smyth and Etty, Miss Cross ran from the house to the workshop, and, climbing the steep ladder which led up to Walter Smyth’s *atelier*, she entered the long shed-like compartment in which Walter spent twelve out of the twenty-four hours daily in manipulating mechanical contrivances of all kinds.

As she reached the top step of the ladder leading to the workshop, the sharp report of a pistol rang out ; and on opening the door of the shed she saw Walter Smyth, with the still smoking weapon in his hand, closely examining the impressions made upon the wall at which he had fired.

With a strength of nerve only, I think, to be found in hospital nurses, Miss Cross entered the workshop, the atmosphere of which was reeking with

the fumes of exploded gunpowder.

Closing the door behind her, this brave but over-daring young woman stood face to face with the man who had loved her from his youth upwards, and whom she had thrown over for a better match.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

What actually passed between Miss Cross and Walter Smyth on that fateful night has never since been satisfactorily explained. No occurrence known in the history of the town evoked such a loud chorus of conflicting opinion ; and to this day the “ Hyson Green Tragedy ” is enveloped in mystery for the inhabitants of a large portion of the country.

Amid the loud hum of speculation, surmise, and conjecture to be heard on all sides, two things only were clear even to the minds of those who were best acquainted with the young couple.

Whilst the aged Mrs. Smyth and her daughter Etty were awaiting the return of Miss Cross and Walter to the little

homestead, two more loud pistol shots rang out on the still evening air ; and in less than two minutes a female figure, clad in uniform, but whose face was hidden by a large handkerchief, which she held with both hands up to it, staggered into the hall and fell prostrate on the floor of Mrs. Smyth's house.

For a moment both the old lady and the young girl were paralysed with fear, and stood with uplifted arms and pallid cheeks at the door of the back parlour, gazing, with a feeling of horror, at the blood-stained and now unconscious form of their guest.

Mrs. Smyth was the first to recover from the shock occasioned by the dreadful sight of her beloved friend covered in blood, and her mind immediately associated Walter with the deed. She had long expected some unpleasant issue of her son's futile passion for Miss Cross ; but she had tried—against her own better judgment—to argue herself into the belief that the trained mind of the nurse would overcome her

son's impetuous nature, or at least divert his thoughts from extreme measures.

But the crisis had come, and appearances pointed but too plainly to a foul crime.

Summoning up all her fortitude, Mrs. Smyth approached the bleeding form of the hapless lady in the hall ; and sending Etty first in quest of Walter—who had left the workshop and went off in an opposite direction to that leading from his shed to the house—and then for Dr. Stevens, the local medical practitioner, she applied such restoratives as she possessed, but all to no purpose.

Blood flowed copiously from the young nurse's cheek, mouth, and throat ; and when the doctor arrived he shook his head gravely, and assured Mrs. Smyth that it was “ not a medical, but a surgical case, which could only be dealt with at the hospital.”

An ambulance was at once requisitioned (the police taking the matter over on the strength of Dr. Stevens

representations); and in less than half an hour from the delivery of the doctor's *fiat* the unfortunate lady was in the hands of the house surgeon of St. Mary's Hospital, who decided upon an immediate operation.

The loss of blood had been very considerable, and this, in addition to the shock to the system, may have had much to do with the subsequent death of the poor girl, who lingered for nearly two days in a semi-comatose state.

On the evening of the second day she regained consciousness, and a magistrate having been hastily summoned, the dying depositions of Miss Cross were taken at the bedside.

But where was Walter Smyth all this time? From the moment that the police took the matter over, every effort was made to trace his movements; but all that could be elicited was that a neighbour, who had heard the report of firearms on the evening of the fatal occurrence, looked in the direction of Smyth's shop, and saw Miss Cross come down the ladder with

a handkerchief to her face, and disappear in Mrs. Smyth's doorway. Immediately afterwards Walter Smyth himself descended the ladder, but instead of following Miss Cross towards his mother's house, he went away at a brisk pace in the opposite direction, and from that hour until the Tuesday following no tidings as to his whereabouts could be ascertained.

Nottingham was, however, by this time ringing with the news of the Hyson Green mystery. The morning and evening papers contained graphic accounts of the sad affair, and suggestions were thrown out as to the probable suicide of the missing and now suspected man.

All speculations were speedily overthrown when, at 4.30 p.m. on that Tuesday evening, Walter Smyth himself walked into the chief Nottingham police station and informed the inspector on duty that, in consequence of the reports published in the papers in connection with the affair at Hyson Green, which he said in the most



solemn manner was "a pure accident," he determined to give himself into the hands of the police at once.

A wholly different complexion was now put upon the case, and the revulsion of popular feeling which at once set in in Smyth's favour was intensified when, two hours after his surrender to the police, he was taken in custody to the bedside of the dying woman, who, in the presence of magistrate, police, medical men and relatives, declared on oath that Walter Smyth was merely explaining some alterations which he contemplated making in revolvers when the weapon in his hands suddenly went off, and inflicted the injuries from which she then knew that she was about to die.

"I declare in the most emphatic manner," testified the dying girl, "that the whole thing was an accident!"

This statement, corroborating, as it did, Smyth's own statement to the police, was generally accepted—especially by those who knew Walter to be a



harmless, inoffensive, and very timid man—as being the true explanation of the tragic occurrence ; and Miss Cross’s death, which took place within four hours after her solemn declaration was made, seemed to impart something of a sacred character to her evidence.

The police authorities, however, would not accept the theory of accident, and relying upon two circumstances—firstly, the manner in which Smyth acted in allowing Miss Cross to walk unaided from his workshop to his mother’s house on the fatal shots being fired ; and secondly, the fact that he had used ball cartridge, whereas blank cartridges would have served for the purposes of his experiments—he was charged with, and subsequently committed for trial, on the capital charge—wilful murder.

When, nearly three months later, the case came before Mr. Justice Hawkins at the Nottingham Assizes, there were very few men in the county who would not have staked almost anything on the acquittal of the

accused man, and bets ran high in his favour.

Contrary to general expectation, however, Walter Smyth was convicted (on purely circumstantial evidence) and sentenced to death.

The public mind was greatly agitated as the day fixed upon for the execution approached. Although the presumption of guilt was very strong, it was agreed upon all hands that there was "an element of doubt in the case, and that the accused should have had the benefit of it."

This feeling was, unhappily for Walter Smyth and his family, not shared by either the judge who passed the sentence nor the Home Secretary, who was appealed to on behalf of the condemned man; and four months after an incident which may have been accidental, and which both the accused and the victim declared was accidental, the last scene of what is still known in the Midlands as "The Hyson Green Tragedy" was played out in Bagthorpe prison, when Walter Smyth

was, to use the expressive phrase by which he foreshadowed his fate to his mother only a few hours before the scene closed upon him for ever, "hung by the neck, like a dog," until he was dead !

Not the least remarkable feature of this remarkable story is to be found in the suggestion, over and over again insisted upon at the time, that the execution of Walter Smyth was less the outcome of a clear conviction of his guilt than of the fact that the weapon from which the fatal shot was fired was one just then the subject of a special parliamentary enactment, and there are thousands alive to-day who openly declare that Walter Smyth fell a victim to the then Home Secretary's celebrated "Pistol Bill," a declaration which, well or ill founded, but intensifies the mystery which still envelops the Hyson Green Tragedy.

## CHAPTER XVII

## SOME INTERESTING PRISON LETTERS

IT has often occurred to me that, apart from the novelty of the thing, a series of letters actually written in a prison cell would throw more light upon the inner life of our penal establishments than any official documents or *ex parte* statements made by liberated convicts can do ; and, as I had ample opportunities of reading prisoners' correspondence, I propose here to reproduce copies of some letters which came in my way during my imprisonment.

Some of those letters were actually

posted, others were not, but were simply taken from the drafts written on slates (one of which is to be found in every cell in every prison in England).

In connection with a prisoner's "slate," I may say that it is quite a common thing, both at Chatham and Portland prisons, to spend the two and a half hours between supper and bedtime in writing letters to one's next door neighbour, and when the cells were open next morning to exchange slates, so that a regular system of intercommunication was thus kept up.

Prison correspondence is rather dry reading as a rule, but now and again that touch of nature which makes the world akin is to be found in letters written in a prison cell, and as, during my long imprisonment, I saw and read many such letters, a few extracts from such compositions as were out of the common may prove entertaining to some of my readers.

Writing from Dartmoor prison, a short time ago, a young man named W. R.—, then under sentence of five

years' penal servitude, addressed his wife in this wise :—

“ DEAR KITTY,

“ I lived in Devon once, but now I am buried in it. I never see a living soul out of uniform, and as for a fire, a chair, a looking-glass, or a clock, I have not clapped eyes on such things since I came to this wilderness.

“ I am not allowed to tell you anything about my prison life ; but I hope, darling, that I shall be able to tell you all about it when we meet and go along those green lanes where we first met. How we *did* enjoy ourselves then !

“ I told Hampton (a solicitor) to send you £20 last month. I hope you received it. But I am more troubled about moles than I am about money.

“ You know about that big one I had on my wrist ? Well, I got into trouble two months ago, and was punished by being put upon bread and water (one pound of bread and as much water as you like) for three days.

“ I got along fairly well until the last day, when I felt so hungry that I put



my teeth into my wrist and bit the mole right off.

“ I am now in the hospital, and am treated very well ; but I expect to be reported and punished on my discharge for having wilfully injured myself.

“ I dream horribly every night of fires, jumping from windows and all that sort of thing. I hope there is no trouble at home—Oh ! home, sweet home ! when shall I see you again ?

“ Tom came to see me the last time. You must come next. He is a new kind of idiot ; and, although I have learned to deal with rogues, I cannot deal with fools.

“ Don't be alarmed if you hear some startling news shortly about—well, about Tom.

“ Yours, etc.,

“ W. R.”

The last paragraph in the foregoing extract is a little mystifying, but we must remember that a censorship



stricter than that which lately obtained in South Africa is exercised in all our convict prisons.

The next letter, however, throws some light upon this paragraph, and gives us an inkling of what this "startling news" really meant.

This important communication comes from a prison official, and foreshadows a state of things likely enough to come to pass at that station.

"H M. PRISON, DARTMOOR.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"I got your letter all right. H—— is doing well, and all that can be done shall be.

"There is a lot of trouble brewing here, and you must not be surprised to hear of some b—— work. Things have gone so far now that I don't see how they can be altered unless *No. 1* is removed.

"However, I shall keep you posted up in all that occurs.

"Yours sincerely,

"L."

The trouble referred to is, I fear, still

looming large over Dartmoor prison, although "No. 1" (the Governor) has been removed and a much younger man (Mr. Basil T——) has lately taken his place.

Dipping into the prison post-bag once more, I fish up the following missive. It is evidently a genuine outburst of feeling on the part of a poor illiterate coster (who was undergoing ten years' penal servitude for manslaughter).

"H.M. PRISON, PRINCETOWN.

"DEAR POLLY,

"I hope this will find you all well, as it leaves me at present.

"Dear Polly, when you came to see me I hadn't much chance to tell you all that is on my mind about you and I——.

"Dear Polly, you know I didn't mean it when I knocked him down. He put upon me, and got some of his pals to 'do' for me. It was a fair fight, and if he got killed it wasn't my fault. His head came against the curb, and I am very sorry for it, more for the old woman's sake than for his, as he was a

cur and wouldn't stand up face to face after the first round.

"Dear Polly, I dream about you and little Joe every night, and wonder if we shall ever be at home and happy again as we used to be.

"Dear Polly, when you answer this send me a lock of your hair. I shall ask the Governor to let me have it, and I don't think he'll refuse me, and it will be a great comfort to look at it now and again.

"Dear Polly, I want you to go down home and kiss my mother for me. I don't think I'll ever see her again, and it breaks my heart so to think about her.

"Dear Polly, don't mind what they say about me. I know they will all try to turn you against me ; but you know I love you, Polly, and although it is a long time to look forward to, we shall be happy again as we used to be.

"Dear Polly, kiss little Joe for me, and tell him daddy is always thinking about him and mammy.

"Dear Polly, I must now close with

fond love to you all, from yours till  
death x x x x x x x x

“ JOE.”

The next letter is in a serious tone, and because of the solemn character of the incident recorded in it, I give it here in full. It was written from one brother to another.

“ H.M. PRISON, CANTERBURY.

“ DEAR JACK,

“The Governor sent for me yesterday and informed me of your inquiries. It is very kind of you to take so much trouble about me, who has brought such disgrace upon the family ; but when you hear what occurred lately I am sure you will agree with me that, bad as things look, my present trouble has been the means of opening my eyes and enabling me to see what I never saw before, and would never see but for it.

“ When I was arrested on Saturday I was taken before the magistrate, remanded, and put into a cell under

the court-house. I was the only one there ; and, feeling that it was all up with me (for they had more than twenty cases against me) I resolved to put an end to myself there and then. I had, in view of being taken, stitched into the lining of my trousers a little white powder—you know what I mean—which would have done the job in five minutes. The police took everything from me, as they thought, but this escaped their notice ; and when the cell door was locked upon me and I found myself in a kind of a tomb—almost dark except for a little gas jet at the top of the cell, and which only threw a miserable ray of dingy coloured light into the cell—I took out the powder and was about to swallow it. Lifting up my head, so as to let the powder down more easily, my eyes caught sight of the gas jet, and in front of it I saw, as clearly as ever I saw her, the face of our dear dead mother. She seemed to frown at me ; and, wondering whether I was asleep or awake, I pinched my arm, and in doing

so I upset the powder, which went all about the floor.

“ My mind was terribly upset ; but, thinking it was mere weakness, I knelt down to scrape up the powder, and as I was on my knees I again saw our mother’s face in front of me.

“ I put out my arms towards her, but the place was so dark that I knocked over a tiny slate which was lying on the table in front of me.

“ The noise startled me a little, but I took up the slate, intending to sweep up the powder upon it, and saw these words, written in chalk upon one side :

‘ GOD LOVES YOU.’

“ Dear brother, you know how many times our dear mother used to say that !

“ Well, her face and those words overcame me ; I left the powder on the floor, and knelt there praying to God to forgive me, and knew no more until I found myself in bed next morning in this prison hospital.

“ It was Saturday morning when I woke up, and the church bells were



ringing out so grand. Oh, Jack! I felt that I was a saved man that morning. The very bells seemed to repeat mother's words, 'God loves you'; and I now see what a bad life I led, but never again!

"Come and see me, and I shall tell you something worth knowing. Love to you and E.

"From your converted brother,  
 "(Signed) HARRY."

I have space only for another letter, and the one that comes to hand, though somewhat of the earth, earthy, is worthy of reproduction, as a fair specimen of prison humour.

"H.M. PRISON,  
 "WORMWOOD SCRUBBS.

"DEAR UNCLE,

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians. I have just obtained permission to write to you, but all references to the internal economy of my prison house I must avoid, and shall, therefore, confine myself to what is going on outside this building; and there is something 'going on' just now



which would do your heart good to hear.

“ It has long been the custom for ineligible ‘ friends ’ of prisoners (men and women who, on the score of their antecedents, are barred from entering the prison) to foregather around the prison walls on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

“ On those occasions the authorities do all they can to preserve the peace ; but omniscience, any more than omnipotence, belongeth not to any human authorities whatever ; and, besides all this, there are those whose souls delight, above all things, in attempts to outrun the constable.

“ Now, I am sorry to say that one of my bosom friends (known to you) took it into his thick head to come round here to-day and ‘ serenade ’ me (from a safe distance, of course) for the space of an hour.

“ Nobody but myself knew who he was, nor whence he came, and I do hope that he escaped being run in. But of all the hideous noises I have ever heard

in my life, I think T——'s well meant 'demonstration' takes the cake.

"Starting in that gruff *basso rotundo* with which we are so well acquainted, he gradually ascended the scale, until he at last broke out into the highest of trebles; and his 'old woman' (who was also on the field of battle and tried her best to shriek him down) had to give up the contest and retire before her spouse had got half way through his song.

"To make matters worse, they nad their tyke with them; and, I suppose, not to be behindhand in this vocal performance, he started howling! with the result that I had to close my ventilator and stuff my fingers in my ears for nearly half an hour!

"You know I like music; but I have an instinctive horror of noise; and I therefore beg that you will go round to T—— as soon as you get this and ask him, as a special favour, to discontinue those *P.S.A. 'concertos,'* by which I have been tortured during the past month.

“ His amorous ditties are very good in their way ; but the instrument is woefully out of tune, and a tuneless pipe is an abomination which I cannot away with.

“ Another point is this : I am a man who loves peace—at almost any price—and I am likely enough to get into no end of trouble if my name is to be made a football of and kicked about every Saturday in this fashion.

“ It is no doubt ‘ excellent to have a giant’s strength ’ of lung ; but is it not tyrannous to use it like a giant—or rather like the bull of Bashan—and bellow for hours outside a fellow’s window when he knows that my tongue is tied up ?

“ I am as likely as not to break out into song myself on some occasions, but we don’t cultivate music in this establishment, and the least attempt to chime in with T—— and his ‘ old woman ’ (plus our old canine friend) would land me in ‘ chokee ’—the prison Tophet.

“ Wherefore beg T—— to turn his

genius into other channels, or, if he needs must chant, tell him to go to St. Paul's, where vocal excellence is always appreciated. But, in any case, let him keep away from these parts and cease from troubling the already overwrought fibres of

“ Your affectionate nephew,  
“ H. H. B.”

## CHAPTER XVIII

## THE HUMOURS OF PRISON LIFE

THE tragic element enters largely into the daily life of a convict ; but that life is not all tragedy. There is a considerable amount of what Dr. Johnson once called “ risible absurdities ” to be found in a prison.

For instance, Peter J. Rawlinson—a pioneer undergoing a long sentence of penal servitude—took it into his head that the authorities at Portland prison were leagued together for the purpose of poisoning him.

No amount of argument on my part could convince Rawlinson that the

officials had no designs upon his life. He would have it that they put arsenic in his food, and on one occasion he made such a hub-bub over his dinner (which he declared "contained enough of poison to kill a hundred men") that he was reported for giving unnecessary trouble, and severely punished.

I was often surprised to find that, although he protested that he would not touch his food, yet very little indeed ever found its way back to the kitchen, where all returned food must, in the ordinary course of things, go.

There were but two cells between that of Rawlinson and my own, and I could, at times, plainly hear some conversation going on between him and one of his two neighbours. One of those men was one day drafted from our ward to another, and, being anxious to get into touch with Rawlinson, I asked of the chief warder to allow of my removal to the vacant cell.

This was done, and on the following night I overheard a dialogue between Rawlinson and the prisoner in the cell



on the off side of him which satisfied me that an artful dodger named Carter was at the bottom of Rawlinson's hallucination.

A tall, bony man, with a large appetite, Carter was not content with his ordinary prison allowance of food, and resolved upon supplementing it by depriving Rawlinson of *his* allowance.

To this end he worked upon the weak mind of poor Rawlinson (who was really a bit of an imbecile), and eventually succeeded in persuading him that, as a chemist, he could aver that a loaf of bread which Rawlinson had given him contained arsenic ; and in the end persuaded his unfortunate dupe to pass on to him all his dinners for the purpose of chemical analysis !

That sort of thing could not, of course, last for ever ; but it lasted for more than three months, during which time poor Rawlinson's dinner was daily devoured by the "chemical analyst," who, under pretence of proving that the food supplied to



Rawlinson was poisoned, contrived to get the whole into his cell and eat it himself.

A common thing in all prisons is to shave one's face whenever a growth of stubble makes the wearer look a little bit seedy. But the prison rules do not now allow the use of the razor, and the ingenious mind has devised a weapon which takes the place of the old orthodox "scraper." This is the tin knife which every convict has in his cell as part of the furniture thereof, and which is generally so blunt that it seems impossible to use it as a razor.

We had a man (Mr. Reynolds) in our party who made a point of sharpening up those blunt edged tin knives in consideration of a "bonus" in the shape of an eight ounce loaf of brown "tommy." Reynolds did a roaring trade at one time, but shortly before I left the prison his customers fell off, and on one particular afternoon he was heard to say that if he did not get more knives to grind he would cut his own throat.

As his services were required, it was decided (by several members of the gang) to keep the old man going, and next day no less than six knives were brought out by six different prisoners and slipped into his hands quietly on parade.

This sudden accession of trade revived the old man's spirits, and he was caught by one of the warders in the very act of stowing the knives away in his boots—the only part of a prisoner's outfit left unexplored on parade.

The discovery of the knives was, of course, a serious matter to all concerned ; but, with the instincts of an artist who perceives that his craft is in danger, he rose to the height of the great argument, and when called upon to account for the possession of so many tin knives, he put a bold face on the matter, and said that he had stolen them from the prisoners' cells !

This confession exonerated his customers from all blame ; and having suffered the punishment imposed by

the Governor for what was supposed to be the results of kleptomania, he resumed his old trade of knife grinder, and was amply repaid by his customers for his self-sacrificing plea to a charge which, if brought home in its entirety, would have involved six other prisoners and have ruined his prospects as a "tradesman."

Another absurd performance was that of a Woolwich butcher's son, who was under sentence of seven years' penal servitude for stealing eighteen head of cattle from a Government contractor of Chatham.

After conviction and sentence this man was sent to Chelmsford gaol, where he appeared to have made up his mind to lead the prison officials a fine dance.

Having complained of illness one day, he was visited by the doctor, who reported that there was nothing at all the matter with him, and ordered his confinement to cells for three days. During the first day things passed off quietly enough ; but, on the morning

of the second day, when the officer unlocked the cell door he found that it would not open.

The prisoner had placed his heavy deal bed board against the inside of the door and, piling up all his cell furniture against it in a most scientific way, converted the prison cell into a kind of "Fort Chabrol."

Many efforts were made by the warders to break into the cell, but it was all to no purpose. The man lay down on his back and grinned at his besiegers, who were at their wits' end to obtain admission. When all other resources had been exhausted the doctor was summoned, and every inducement was held out to the prisoner to remove the fortifications which he had erected within the cell, and which defied all the efforts of the prison warders to break through.

Nearly two days passed in this way—the authorities trying to get into the cell, and the mad butcher's son defying them to enter.

At the end of the third day, and

when the engineer was about to employ scientific methods to gain an entry to the cell, the doctor addressed the besieged man through the inspection hole and promised to remove him to the infirmary if he would at once dismantle his fortified post and allow the warders to enter the cell.

Feeling, I suppose, that he could hold out no longer, this desperado consented to remove his fortifications, and after a three days' siege upon an empty stomach he threw up the sponge, and removing his artfully arranged defences, suffered himself to be led away to the hospital, where (as he subsequently informed me) he lived in clover for about three months.

Another oddity with whom I was well acquainted at Parkhurst was a Polish Jew named S. B., who is, even while I am writing these lines, under remand at Brixton prison upon a very serious charge, of which more anon.

B—— was working in the same party in which I was employed, and sat beside me daily for nearly six



months. He is a very intelligent man, and spent most of his spare time in conjugating French verbs and murdering the Queen's English.

About forty-eight years of age, he was a strong, healthy man, and quite capable of doing a fair day's work. But he had an aversion to work of any kind, and tried all sorts of dodges to evade labour. We were one day required to cart some tar from one part of the prison to another, and B———was ordered by the officer in charge of the party to unload a consignment of pitch which had that morning been sent down by the steward for the purpose of making a new footpath.

B——— did not care for the job, and protested vehemently (in broken English) that he could not do the work allotted to him (we all knew that it was a lazy habit which prevented him from doing his share of the work), and as others had to do his share as well as their own, many prisoners naturally objected to B———'s presence in

the party, and thought that he should have been removed to another (light labour) gang.

One morning B—— came to me and said : “ Can you chew tobacco ? ”

“ Not very well,” replied I, “ but I can smoke it, and would like to have the pipe of peace now.”

“ I am afraid that I cannot give you smoking mixture, but I have a fine old cut of thick cavendish, which, if you care to chew, I can let you have. But I want to ask a favour.”

“ What is it ? ” queried I.

“ You know that beastly job we had put upon us yesterday ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, I don’t like it, and I want you to help me on with it.”

“ Why don’t you like it ? ”

“ Oh, it’s too d——d hard.”

“ How is it that you try to get out of every job we’re put to ? Don’t you feel well ? ”

“ Yes, I’m well enough, but you can’t believe how very lazy I am ! ”

Another extremely lazy convict was



a medical man who was under a three years' sentence for having performed an illegal operation. Using his professional knowledge, Dr. T—— "faked" himself in such a way that without seriously injuring himself he contrived to evade labour for fully eighteen months. At the end of that time, however, the prison doctor appeared to have realised that his patient was a fraud, and nettled at the idea of being outwitted by one of his own calling, he thoroughly overhauled him, and within two hours after his examination Dr. T—— was sent out to work. It has been said that "when Greek meets Greek then comes the tug-of-war," and this was exemplified in the conflict between those two professional men.

Having discovered that the convict doctor had been tricking him, the medical officer kept a sharp eye upon him. But he found a match in Dr. T——, who, since he could no longer sham illness, made up his mind to gain his point in another way.

I had only just got to the bottom of a long flight of steps which led from the chapel, one morning, when I heard a loud "Oh!" behind, and on looking back saw three men lifting up another prisoner, who had evidently slipped on the stairs. That prisoner was Dr. T——. He had broken his leg, and was immediately carried to the hospital, where he lived in clover for fully four months, and as his time had then expired, he was shortly afterwards released, having put in two years and three months without doing a single week's work.

I heard from a man who accompanied "the doctor" to London on the date of his discharge that the latter openly gloated over his defeat of the official *medico*, and declared that he had fully made up his mind from the first to evade labour by exercising his medical wit. "It was," said he in the railway carriage, "a case of diamond cut diamond between us, and my stone has taken the cake."

## CHAPTER XIX

## SOME PAINFUL SCENES

I HAVE seen some sad sights in hospitals and workhouses, in mortuaries and police courts ; but I have never seen anything which left such deep impressions upon my mind, or which made unkind words and actions so hateful to me as certain scenes which I witnessed, from time to time, in one or other of H.M.'s prisons.

Whilst awaiting trial at the Old Bailey on one occasion I was placed beside a man who was to be tried next day for the murder of his wife. When I first saw this prisoner in the police

van he did not look much more than thirty years of age, and his hair was quite dark. But as he stood beside me in the old stone yard at Newgate, on the morning of his trial, his hair was almost white, and he looked every day sixty.

Supposing that he was funkling over his coming trial, I asked him how he felt about it.

"Oh, I wish it was all over," said he.

"Do you think you have any chance of getting off?" ventured I.

"Get off? I hope not. If I do I shall cut my throat."

"Why?"

"I can't live. *She* haunts me, and I can stand it no longer. If she only knew how I loved her, but——"

At this point the prematurely-aged man fairly broke down, and the attention of the warder having been attracted, we had to drop the conversation.

Twenty minutes later I was called out to the iron cage where prisoners

were interviewed by their friends, and there saw this hapless man taking a fond farewell of an old lady and a little child. The lady was the prisoner's mother, and the child was the offspring of himself and his murdered wife. I thought that I had never seen anything so affecting as this parting between the widowed mother and her son. Indeed, even the gaoler himself, accustomed as he was to such scenes, was evidently moved by it, and turned his head aside.

I never saw that man again, as I was myself tried and sentenced on that morning, but on reaching Chelmsford prison (six weeks later) I heard that he had been hung at Newgate a fortnight before.

A similar scene occurred at Nottingham prison when the "Hyson Green murderer" was about to be executed. I had little or no sympathy for W. S——, as I thought the murder of Miss Cross a most brutal one; but knowing the agonies suffered by the man's relatives, and witnessing the

parting scene within the prison on the day before the execution, I cried like a child when I saw an old man and two ladies carried out of the visiting-room in an unconscious state. The whole party had swooned away, and a gallon of water, which I was called upon by the warder to bring up to the scene, failed to bring them round. The prisoner was a strong young man, but he completely collapsed, and was (to use his own phrase) next morning "hung like a dog by the neck."

I was one day working in the stone quarries at Portland, when a middle aged prisoner, with whom I was then very intimate, came to my side and whispered, "Dreadful news to-day, No. 7. My little boy was run over by a hansom a month ago, and I have just been informed that he died yesterday. Poor little chap, I shall never kiss him again!"

Of course I condoled with him, but on such occasions one scarcely knows what to say, and I am afraid that my expressions of sympathy did not afford



much consolation. I watched the effect which the ill news made on my friend, and found that he had taken it so much to heart that his health was giving way ; but he still kept at work, and I was in hopes that time would heal the sore.

Alas ! when troubles come, they come not in single file, but in battalions.

Within two months of the death of his child this unlucky man was visited by the chaplain and informed that his wife also was dead, having committed suicide through grief.

When I heard this I hoped that I should never have to look upon the sorrow-stricken face of my fellow convict again, as I could not bear to see his sufferings, knowing how powerless I was to help.

My hope was realised. The second blow proved too much for him, and within forty-eight hours of the chaplain's visit to his cell poor H—— was lying in the hospital a raving maniac !

Many such incidents have occurred in my time. In less than five years I



have known as many as twenty prisoners who have died by grief or suicide in consequence of family misfortunes, which no doubt they were conscious of having themselves contributed to.

There is (or was) a lad in Derby gaol who was under a ten years' sentence for arson. The boy (he was barely sixteen) was sane and sound enough when I first saw him in the prison. But he had not been there eighteen months before a series of accidents befell his family which is without a parallel in my prison experience.

First, the boy's father was killed by a crane accident while at work. Then some six months later his mother, who had taken to drink on the death of her husband, fell in the streets and afterwards died in hospital from concussion of the brain.

Later on this young convict received ill tidings from the workhouse, to which his three younger brothers and a baby sister were sent on the death of their mother.

Some kind of fever had broken out and carried off the youngest of the two boys and the baby girl, so that in less than eight months four members of this unfortunate youth's family had died. Is it any wonder that the youth himself should give way under such a load ?

Before I left the prison he had twice attempted to commit suicide, and when I saw him for the last time I knew too well that the mental balance was lost.

But the foregoing are not the only kind of sad scenes one witnesses in a prison. Here is a little incident which occurred under my own eyes at Wormwood Scrubbs prison some short time back.

A rough coster-like man, named Bill Harrod, had long been unable to obtain work of any kind, and was often obliged to go home to his wife, after a hard day's tramp in search of employment, to find an empty cupboard and a fireless grate.

This kind of thing could not long be borne by any man with the least

instincts of manhood within him ; and so, since he could not get money honestly, he committed a robbery, was arrested, and finally sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.

Placed in the next cell to mine, I had ample opportunities for observing this man's ways and character, and I must say that, rough as he appeared to be, he had a deep and strong affection for his wife.

One night I heard some voices (a male's and a female's) outside my cell, and on placing my bed board against the window and putting my ear to the ventilator, I heard the woman's voice quite distinctly cry out, "Cheer up, Bill. It didn't matter if you got twenty years, I would still be the same to you, so don't fret for my sake, I'll do somehow."

"Bravo, Lizzie," replied a voice which I at once recognised as Bill Harrod's. "Bravo, Lizzie. I always believed you were a trump card, and now I know it. Go down home, sell everything you can lay your hands on,

get some kind of job till I come out, and we'll be happy together again. God bless you, girl. Be good."

It is easy to say "be good," but, however willing one may be, it is not always easy to do what one wills !

Thus it was with Bill's wife, Lizzie. For a month or two she struggled to "go right" (to use a phrase in one of her letters to Bill), but fortune was against her, and she could not find work of any kind. This preyed upon her mind, and she gave way to the demon drink offered her by those who, though they would not give her sixpence for a meal, were ready enough (for the sake of her company) to spend shillings upon her in intoxicating liquors.

Things soon went from bad to worse with her, and in due time, to find a shelter one night, she accepted the proposal of a man whom she casually met in a public-house, and for the first time in her life became a prostitute.

Ill news travels fast. A friend of Bill Harrod's was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for assaulting

a policeman, and having been taken to Wormwood Scrubbs he fell in with his old chum, and told him that he had seen his wife at the "Elephant and Castle" in company with another man, and that she was in fact on the streets.

This news so upset Harrod that he resolved upon revenge. True himself, he could not bear the thought of the woman whom he so dearly loved, and in whom he trusted, being false.

The sad sequel is soon told. The correspondence between husband and wife ceased, and the woman gradually drifted into a vicious life.

On the expiration of his sentence Bill found that all his belongings had been sold up, that all his former friends had turned against him, and that his wife was then living with another man.

Finding out her whereabouts, he one night waylaid her, and, after some warm words between them, he cut her throat with a clasp-knife, and then tried to commit suicide.

Both were taken to Guy's Hospital, where the woman subsequently died.

Harrod, however, recovered, and within six months of the occurrence was tried at the Old Bailey, found guilty of wilful murder, and sentenced to death.

A strong recommendation to mercy was made by the jury, and it was generally felt that the provocation was so great that the Home Secretary would be justified in commuting the sentence to one of penal servitude.

This was done, and while I am writing the history of this occurrence the man Harrod is working out the twenty years which he must serve before being released on licence at H.M. prison, Princetown.

THE END.











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